

VITA WA WATU

A NEW AFRIKAN THEORETICAL JOURNAL

BOOK TWELVE



April 1988

Book Twelve

April 1988

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NOTES ON CADRE POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

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1. The Need For A Policy: Points Of Departure

Suggestions have arisen from within our ranks that more of our cadres should: 1) keep politics in command; 2) maintain the line; 3) take up more work among the masses. These suggestions are used here as points of departure in outlining a policy to guide the selection and development of New Afrikan communist cadres.

The proposed policy is based on the need to fulfill certain fundamental tasks which emerge from our line for this period. The line, expressed by the slogan "Re-Build," broadly implies our need to re-organize, and our need to have this process (re-organization) reflect and be guided by rectification and re-orientation.

Why do We need a policy on cadre selection and cadre development? Why must We discuss the elements that such a policy must contain?

Stated simply, the proposed policy holds that: 1) qualified cadres are a precondition for the development of a revolutionary party organization and a revolutionary movement; our cadres must be carefully selected, and primary attention should be given to the level of their national and class consciousness, and their vanguard character; 2) the development of our cadres should proceed in a systematic manner.

We need to guide the selection and development of our cadres with such a policy because We don't presently have one; without one We'll (continue to) move along the path of spontaneous and sporadic development, and amateurish political practice. We must discuss and carefully choose the elements of the policy because We need consistency in our ideology, our organizational development, and in our work among the masses.

Let's return to our points of departure. Without raising any questions as to their underlying assumptions or the circumstances which give rise to them, We could readily agree with the suggestions that more of our cadres must "keep politics in command," "maintain the line," and "take up more work among the masses." However, as New Afrikan communist cadres, We have been trained to "question everything," and to seek out, analyze and weigh the causes and/or circumstances surrounding the appearance and development of all social phenomena.

For instance, in our unquestioning agreement with the suggestions, We'd be assuming that "our" cadres share a commitment to specific short-range and long-range goals. There would also be unspoken assumptions relative to the words used, and to the concepts that the words symbolize. That is, We'd be assuming that "our" cadres share specific definitions of words, and concepts such as "cadre," "politics," "line," and of what it means to "keep politics in command."

Furthermore, We'd be assuming: 1) that We HAVE competent cadres, which further assumes the existence of a functioning organization, since We can't speak of cad-

res without first speaking of an organized structure. Within such a framework, “cadres” generally refers to comrades who are “full-time Party workers, wholly and completely at the disposal of the Party”; comrades, who can insure the continuity of the Party’s policies and activities, and who have the discipline and skill required for successfully implementing the Party’s line and tactics; 2) that We have cadres who can keep OUR politics in command because they grasp them firmly, and they share the commitment to our ideological perspective; 3) that We have cadres who can maintain the line not only because they know what OUR line is (and the differences between our line and the lines of other formations—something which doesn’t generally characterize activists in the movement at present), but also because they’ve helped to shape it—they’ve rectified and re-oriented, studied the past and summed up its lessons, analyzed present conditions, shared their insight, and helped shape the common vision; 4) that We have cadres with confidence in themselves and in the masses; cadres with the acquired patience and wisdom that will enable them to work among the masses independently and effectively.

To further emphasize the point: Before We can expect cadres to competently work among the masses, maintaining the line and keeping politics in command, WE MUST FIRST HAVE CADRES. Let’s simply state here that a “cadre” is not the same as a mere “activist,” someone “with potential,” or someone who, on the surface, seems to share our political and military ideas. For us to expect cadres to “keep politics in command,” We must have some assurance that they share our understanding of “politics,” and that they know what OUR politics are. Similarly, to expect our cadres to “maintain the line,” We must be assured that they know WHICH LINE to maintain and how to do it.

The emphasis on these points is required for an understanding of the policy and of the circumstances which make it necessary. These points are fundamental to an understanding of the reasons for many of our past (and present) weaknesses and setbacks. That is, We have failed in the past, in many instances, because We had tried to build an organization without having sufficiently solid, mutual commitment to short-range and long-range goals—goals encompassing the entire scope of the socio-political responsibilities of a genuine revolutionary vanguard (e.g., the BLA was never an ideologically homogeneous organization; it found its basic unity on the question of “armed struggle,” and never moved beyond seeing itself as a conglomeration of military units which “politically educated” its members. It must be understood: a “military vanguard” is not the same as a “revolutionary vanguard.” The former is narrow, and the latter is broad in the scope of respective responsibilities. A revolutionary vanguard is representative of the nation’s most revolutionary class and the people as a whole).

We failed in the past, in many instances, because We didn’t (and don’t yet) have commitment to sufficiently developed, commonly held understanding of fundamental concepts (e.g., “vanguard,” “nation,” “dialectical materialism”). We failed in the past because We didn’t (and don’t yet) have qualified CADRES, in sufficient number and compositions (e.g., the Black Panther Party didn’t have a class-based criteria for selection of members, nor a systematic process of cadre development. Thus, when many party chapters were attacked by the state and leadership was removed, the chapters were unable to rebuild. When the party split, the “East Coast Party” never consolidated itself as a “new-style PARTY” operating on the basis of revolutionary scientific socialist theory. Later the BLA bemoaned the loss of its “political leadership,” i.e., “the party,” because its members had never fully had—or had abandoned—any realization that THEY were in fact party members/cadres. The party can’t be “lost” so long as its members are qualified to rebuild it, and accept the responsibility for doing so). Consequently, We couldn’t help but NOT be able, as an organized force, to carry on ALL FORMS of work

among the masses (i.e., political, economic and social—as well as military), maintaining OUR line, and keeping OUR politics in command.

2. On What It Means To “Keep Politics In Command”

For us, to “keep politics in command” means consistent adherence to the principles of our philosophy, and our ideology; it means We must keep our theory, policies and lines, in command of ALL our thoughts and actions.

As We re-build, We must base ourselves on an understanding of “politics” as AN ENTIRE WORLDVIEW—an EVOLVING...new...WAY OF LIFE—forged in the process of struggle to end our oppression and exploitation, and to build a socialist society.

We have no maps to guide us along the road leading to the new society. We will confront many obstacles, and the means of overcoming them won’t fall from the sky; many questions will be raised, and the answers to them won’t be found written in stone.

Only the outcome of day-to-day struggle will reveal the specific features of the revolutionary, socialist culture that emerges as We “keep politics in command.” Correct ideas come from one source—our social practice and proper analyses of it, made on the basis of our evolving worldview, which stands on a foundation of dialectical materialist philosophy.

In our movement, when folks use the phrase “keep politics in command,” they usually mean: 1) to maintain a “political” versus a “militarist” perspective; or, 2) to maintain a “revolutionary” perspective versus a liberal/opportunist or reactionary one; or, 3) to base thoughts and actions on “political” versus “economic” considerations; or, 4) to remain steadfast in the grasp and implementation of the political LINE. Each of these concepts are correct AS FAR AS THEY GO. However, each is also an example of the one-sided, non-dialectical analyses that characterize the revolutionary movements on this continent.

We’ve had difficulty maintaining a correct perspective—difficulty in “keeping politics in command”—largely because our understanding of the concept and practice of “politics” has been too narrow, shallow, and inconsistent philosophically and ideologically.

“Politics” (i.e., ALL activity linked with relations between peoples, centered on the seizure, retention, and use of state power), is most often thought of too narrowly when described in terms associated with little more than the institutions and practices of governments, or with the structures and activity of bourgeois political parties and the bourgeois electoral process.

Thinking of politics in this way is also shallow or superficial, because it focuses on only one or a few forms of political expression, and not on all forms or the essence of politics. In this way, our theoretical orientation is limited to only one or a few levels of socio-political practice. Consequently, as We interact in society as a whole—especially in the course of a protracted, revolutionary people’s war—it’s easy for us to become disillusioned and disoriented, as We’re affected by complex and multi-leveled phenomena from ALL spheres of social life, i.e., economic, social, military, psycho-ideological.

For instance, because our concept of “politics” was so narrow, We felt the We had no “ready-made” solutions to questions of morality, or We felt that our “politics” was an inadequate source of possible solutions. We sometimes felt that We had nothing in our “politics” to “lean on” or to support us and guide us through the confrontation with

psychological or emotional hardships. We sometimes, too, felt there was nothing in our “politics” to help us resolve contradictions in our personal lives or contradictions within our families. We incorrectly drew a distinction between our “politics” and our “way of life,” i.e., the new culture that can only emerge in the course of struggle. We failed to realize that our “politics” and our “way of life” are—that they must become—one and the same. How is this so?

Again, because “politics”—in its essence—involves ALL relations between people in society. ALL economic, social, military actions...ALL “personal” opinions, ideas and sympathies, constitute the ESSENCE of “politics.” OUR politics, which is scientifically grounded, is based on our knowledge and application of the laws of natural and social development. Our politics is directed toward the realization of the all-round interest of our society/nation.

Therefore, the fundamental meaning of “keep politics in command” begins with the maintenance of philosophical consistency. In order to know and to apply the laws of social development, We must build upon one of our previous declarations of a principle:

The tool of analysis is for us a further development of the historical materialist method, the dialectical method...We understand the process of revolution, and fundamental to this understanding is this fact: Marxism is developed to a higher level when it is scientifically adapted to a people’s unique national condition, becoming a new ideology altogether. (1)

This declaration expressed the proper perspective, but carrying out the “further development” proved easier to say than to do. As individuals, and as an organization, We failed to see that We were dealing with much more than a simple “method of analysis,” narrowly speaking. By narrow here, We mean our mistake of viewing the dialectical materialist “method” as something We do “after a fashion” or “according to plan,” rather than as a philosophical process of arriving at knowledge and truth on the basis of a consistent materialist interpretation of ALL natural and social development. In other words, DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM IS THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF OUR WAY OF LIFE—IT’S AT THE CENTER OF WHAT IT MEANS TO “KEEP POLITICS IN COMMAND.”

Our failure to grasp and act on this point consequently meant that We’d stumble or regress in the pursuit of national independence and socialism—the logical outcome of consistent IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT on the basis of dialectical materialism adapted to our unique national situation. Only in this way could We have—only in this way can We—keep OUR politics in command.

3. A Few Points On “Maintaining The Line”

Cadres can’t be expected to “maintain the line” if they don’t know what a line is, generally speaking, and especially if they don’t know what OUR particular line is for any period, stage, or field of struggle. Therefore, We should briefly discuss what a line IS, and what a line DOES; then, We should discuss our particular line for this period, emphasizing the tasks of cadres and our policy on the selection of cadres and their development.

Just as it would be an error to view politics only in the narrow forms of its expression, it would be just as erroneous to restrict ourselves to viewing only its essential or

general character. As We noted above, our (political) struggle is fundamentally concerned with obtaining, keeping, and using state (political) power—to satisfy our national (independence) and social (socialism) interests. Our politics, therefore, flows from the general to the particular, expressing itself in ALL spheres of social life, i.e., as “lines” in the economic, military, labor, and all other fields.

“Lines” are, therefore, particular expressions or applications of “politics” as defined above. That is, lines reflect and apply the objective laws of social development in each sphere of social life and in every form of the practice of revolutionary movements and parties. Lines take their shape on the basis of philosophy (dialectical materialism), ideology (national independence; New Afrikan communism), and theory (protracted, people’s war), and manifest themselves particularly through policies and programs, strategies and tactics.

Lines are formed through the process of study and analysis. For lines to be correctly formulated in each area of social life, analyses in these areas are necessary, e.g.:

To put forward a correct political line for the new party, we must have concrete analyses of concrete conditions on the major questions: class structure, the national question, trade union work, the woman question, the international situation, etc. (2)

We can see from our own experience and from study of other revolutionary struggles, that “The correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything.” That is, when lines are correct, We advance, and when they are incorrect We suffer setbacks, We make “mistakes” and commit fundamental errors.

Our movement has a tendency to attribute the CAUSES of setbacks, “mistakes” and errors to EXTERNAL sources, e.g., “J. Edgar Hoover destroyed the Party,” and “COINTELPRO destroyed the movement.” Our primary attention has to be on the role that WE played or failed to play in the undermining of our formations and in allowing the diversion of our movement.

As We focus our attention internally, as We look to distant and recent past, We ask questions about previous lines, and the answers to these questions become part of the lines We form for present and future practice. What were the lines put forward in the various fields, by the many political forces which were (have been proven) correct and which were (have been proven) incorrect? WHY were these lines correct or incorrect? What positions were raised in opposition to the correct lines, and what arguments were raised in opposition to the incorrect lines? What have We learned from analysis of just the past fifteen years that We can term essential elements of our present line—a line that must take us into the 1990s and beyond?

We regard the “reluctance” to pay due attention to our own weaknesses and shortcomings as a key link in the chain of our setbacks, therefore We’ll emphasize this point: In order for falls into the pit to lead to gains in the wit, as We analyze concrete conditions, We must study the past as well as the present, and We must focus on our own weaknesses, OUR mistakes, OUR incorrect lines and the incorrect assumptions and analyses upon which they were based.

Initiating and summing up the analyses that will form present and future lines, requires a knowledge of previous lines on all related issues. Knowledge of previous lines is an essential forerunner to the development of correct lines for the present.

It’s important to know the course of development of previous correct and incor-

rect lines (i.e., the actions guided by them, the results of these actions over a period of time, which organizational, movement, and class forces supported or opposed the lines, etc.), because all these are factors rooted in the class struggles that take place inside the organization, the movement, and the nation. Moreover, incorrect lines re-appear again and again in the course of struggle, in new forms. Therefore, it will be necessary to be able to recognize them, distinguish one line from another, and to engage in struggle with them and the forces representing them, so that they can be defeated and corrected, and so that correct lines and revolutionary forces can emerge:

History tells us that correct political and military lines do not emerge and develop spontaneously and tranquilly, but only in the course of struggle. These lines must combat “Left” opportunism on the one hand and Right opportunism on the other. (3)

Cadres must take active part in the recurring and necessary ideological and theoretical struggles inside and outside the organization. They must take an active role in the development of the correct political lines. They must bring to this task both rich and varied practical experience, and a thorough, firm, creative and critical grasp of “politics” and analytical ability (e.g., the laws of contradiction, principles of political economy, criticism and self-criticism, etc.):

A wise political line produces good cadres. Cadres are trained and mature under a wise line. On the other hand, they take part in the making and development of the line, they ensure the realization of the line. Without competent cadres, even though we have worked out a line, it will be useless. If cadres are bad, they will damage the line itself. If cadres are good and able, they not only help to carry out the line creatively but also contribute to its development...

(4)

(Not many of us will argue against the suggestion that continuous re-examination of the past is essential to on-going development. However, from some quarters We'll hear defensive protests against the suggestion that We mustn't fear or avoid the public exposure and analyses of our mistakes, weaknesses, defeats. Some of those who raise such cries will simply be trying to “protect themselves” in one way or another, from exposure of their shortcomings. Others will act on an honest but mistaken idea that such exposures are harmful to the course of struggle, and feel that telling the truth to the people will undermine the masses' faith in us and in the struggle. However, the harm actually comes when We try to hide the truth from the people—because it deprives the people of knowledge, consciousness, and fails to give them the opportunity to become acquainted with the concepts and skills gained in using scientific principles and methods of struggle. The masses will surely come to have greater respect for those of us who can admit our mistakes, point out their causes, correct them, and continue to struggle. The masses can only respect those of us who can unmask ourselves; they can only respect those of us who show our faith in the people, and that We believe in their wisdom and their abilities...We sometimes say “the people must learn from their own experience,” but an event is not an “experience” to be learned from unless it is exposed, analyzed,

made part of the record and available to us so that We—the masses—can use it to nurture ourselves.)

Based on the above, We can approach an understanding of the ways in which lines provide ORIENTATION, i.e., offering stable points of reference, information and insight, and provide guideline relative to the scope of activity (i.e., local or regional, high or low profile, modest or extreme, broad or narrow, embracing all classes or limited to certain sectors of the people, etc.).

Most importantly, (and especially for our present purpose), the line indicates the tasks to be taken up (i.e., tasks for the stage, the period, the movement, the organization, and for the cadres of the organization):

The problem of cadres is posed under the premise that the line has been worked out. That is why a wise political line is the precondition for the existence of good cadres. It is quite impossible to have good cadres if the line is wrong...

After the Party has worked out a correct political line, organizational work in general, and cadre work in particular, are decisive factors for success in the revolutionary tasks...(5)

In turn, the tasks point out specific requirements relative to cadres entrusted with their realization:

Cadre policy, if it is to be correct, must proceed from the requirements of the revolutionary tasks. The revolution needs a contingent of cadres who are equal to their political tasks, with regard to their number and quality as well as to their composition, a contingent of cadres capable of fulfilling to the highest degree the requirements of the political tasks in each period...(6)

The line is a result of our look back, a result of our analyses of past and present conditions. As We form or articulate the line We say things like: “Such and Such were the Conditions. In response to these Conditions, This and That happened—This was done by So & So, because they believe that Up was Down, and they interpreted It to be As, and Then to be Now. That was done by You-Know-Who, because they thought Up was Out, and they interpreted It to be As only when Down was In. Consequently, nothing turned out as anyone had predicted. However, So & So was right about That part of This, and You-Know-Who was right about This part of That. It turns out that no one considered These Factors or Those Factors, which even today continue to influence the course of events. Therefore, We can see that not only was This happening Then, but it’s also happening Now. In view of all this, We must...”

i hope i didn't lose anyone. But the trip was similar to those normally made in actual analyses, yet some of us usually stop short of checking out all sides of things and tracing all interconnections and relationships. As We do so, We're contributing to the formation of lines. And these lines tell us not only what has happened and why, they also tell us what We must do, why We must do it, and it gives us our general guidelines as to

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how We must do it. In other words, the line indicates the tasks to be taken up, e.g., if the line says the movement and the organization has suffered repression, it indicates that We must re-build. If “re-build” comes to “symbolize” the line, We analyze this slogan to discover its parts, etc., and in doing so We discover the tasks that must be taken up by the movement, the organization, and by our cadres.

We believe “Re-Build” is a slogan/line that applies to the entire New Afrikan Independence Movement, because the movement needs to (to some extent, has been) re-orient and re-organize itself. In terms of re-orientation, the movement must adjust to objective reality and establish new principles (or to reinforce old ones)). For instance, We ain’t calling ourselves a “civil rights movement” or an ambiguously defined “black power” or “black liberation” movement. We ain’t adopting lines from the CP-USA and saying We gonna form united fronts against fascism, nor are We adopting lines from the Trots and saying We gonna establish a “black dictatorship in amerikkka.”

The line for this stage says We’re waging a New Afrikan national liberation revolution, i.e., it’s a struggle for national independence, and socialism. In terms of re-organization, the movement must “modify” its structure, its style, seeing itself as similar to resistance movements in those European countries that were occupied by Germany in the 1940’s, or those Asian countries that were occupied by the Japanese; or, as similar to those national liberation fighters in cities under the control of French, British, or Portuguese forces on the Afrikan continent in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.

(How did Malcolm say it: REAL REVOLUTIONS are hostile—it’s us against them, separate and opposed...Some people talk about a “nation” but don’t really wanna be one (independent), as evidenced by their efforts to crawl back on the plantation. How can We tell? You can identify those trying to crawl onto the plantation by the way they identify themselves, i.e. “blacks,” “Afro-Amerikkans,” “Afrikan-Amerikkans,” “ethnic group,” “minority nationality,” “National minority,” “underclass”—anything and everything except New Afrikans, an oppressed nation. Amerikkka is the plantation, and continuing to identify yourself within the amerikkkan context is evidence of the colonial (“slave”) mentality. Ain’t no two ways about it.)

The line for the period—again, “Re-Build”—indicates that everything We had constructed while “building to win” has been effectively destroyed. We’ve been attacked, the subjects of a counter-revolutionary thrust; We’ve been dis-oriented and dis-organized; the masses have lost the revolutionary initiative; this is a “low-tide” and the focus is on re-building political bases.

We must emphasize rebuild, i.e., that We must re-orient and re-organize, because the destruction to our previous structures—and the reasons for it—wasn’t of a mere quantitative nature. That is, the movement and our organizations didn’t suffer defeat and setback simply because of the state’s repression, but also—primarily—because our “minds weren’t right.” Our thinking was faulty. Our practice wasn’t up to par. The structures that We had built were unable to withstand the onslaught of the empire, so there must have been something wrong with these structures. Consequently, We don’t wanna simply reconstruct the “same” structures or the same kind of structures. We gotta re-think the situation, and come up with some new designs and some new alloys that will be able to withstand future waves of repression, while also being adequate means of helping us secure power.

The line for our organization—Re-Build—says We get our minds right (in itself a necessary form of revolutionary practice), and let the theory guide our other forms of

practice. We want our cadres to take up more work among the masses, but that work has to be guided by the line(s), so that We can keep our politics in command. We want our cadres to keep our politics in command, maintain the line, and take up more work among the masses—but first We must have cadres, and good ones at that.

4. Our Policy On Cadre Development

The movement and its organization must be re-built—by cadres. We look to the past and see that one of our major weaknesses was the lack of attention given to properly selecting and training cadres. We claimed to base ourselves on Marxist-Leninist theory (e.g., with respect to party-building), and to be aware of the class dimensions of the national liberation struggle. Yet, We ignored or overlooked the need to use class-based and vanguard criteria in the selection and training of party members and cadres. In point of fact, We were more ignorant of the process of building revolutionary scientific socialist parties than We realized. (There wasn't much material on this in THE RED BOOK or in Mao's military writings, and by 1970-71, We'd been so disappointed by Huey Newton & Co., and so misguided by our own petty-bourgeois mentalities and our misinterpretations of certain South American experiences, that We, in effect, abandoned the PRINCIPLE of the need for a party, i.e., THE NECESSITY FOR A PARTY ORGANIZATION IF REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE IS TO BE EFFECTIVELY GENERATED AND SUCCESSFUL.)

As We stated earlier, We need a policy on cadres in order to help us abandon the path of spontaneous and sporadic development, and to rise above amateurish political practice. We need the policy as a means of helping us achieve consistency in our ideological and organizational development, and in our work among the masses. As with the discussions on politics and line, We'll outline the proposed policy by moving from the general to the particular.

What is a "policy," generally speaking? Some of us may respond with something like: "A policy is the starting point of all practical actions of a revolutionary party, and manifests itself in the process and the end-result of that party's actions." However, does this tell us what a policy IS? We don't think so. We think it tells us what a policy does, why a policy is necessary, and why it must be articulated, understood, and accepted as one's own—before initiating actions.

Stated simply, a policy is the objectives and/or goals that We set for ourselves, and the means We adopt toward the realizations of these objectives:

A policy is a clear vision of a goal; the definite choice of a path to be taken in pursuit of that goal. A policy guides the selection of specific methods and/or acceptable procedures to be used along the path; it helps determine the decisions which have to be made as unforeseen situations arise. (7)

Policies don't fall from the sky; they are specific manifestations of philosophy, ideology and theory, derived from analyses of concrete conditions. The proposed policy is a result of an analysis of our practice, and a result of our examination of the experiences of others who have waged (successful and unsuccessful) national liberation and revolutionary struggles. Further, it's a result of the requirements revealed by our line,

and is a specific application of the line. Again, our line is also a result of our analyses of previous periods and stages of our struggle, with particular focus on the advances and setbacks over the past twenty-five years in our efforts to build effective revolutionary organizations and a national liberation movement.

Now that We have this general definition of “policy,” We can now restate OUR policy on cadres and their development. We can’t re-build our party—a party able to function under any conditions, in all spheres of social life—without cadres. We can’t carry on work among the masses without cadres. We can’t give rise to, and sustain, a vigorous, consistent, national revolutionary movement, without cadres. Thus, our goal is to have cadres who are equal to their tasks (especially with regard to their quality and composition), and to achieve this goal through systematic development (i.e., systematic recruitment, training, appointment, fostering, promotion, appraisal and evaluation).

At this point, We can’t repeat it too often:

Generally speaking, cadres are products of a movement. They mature in the organization, in the life and activity of the organization, in the process of work and struggle to bring to reality the political line and tasks. On the other hand, in order to give rise to a movement and to ensure its more and more vigorous development, we must have cadres. To ensure that our organizations can operate and operate fruitfully, we must have cadres, and good ones at that. This is why the foremost task of all revolutionary movements and all revolutionary organizations is to endeavor to train and foster cadres in a systematic manner. At the same time, cadres must endeavor to train themselves and raise their capabilities. This task is now posed before us in all its urgency. (8)

In a similar way;

...the transition to a new stage of political struggle usually requires new people who can meet the new tasks and/or old experienced people who can make a serious self-criticism of their previous political habits and transform their political personalities to meet the new needs. This kind of self-evaluation and transformation is not easy for most people to make. As the objective situation becomes more revolutionary, an increasing number of militants begin to feel the need of an organization to help them make the many decisions that now become pressing: How to respond to the growing demands from the masses for leadership or to the provocations and opportunities proffered by the enemy to render one useless; what to do, what not to do, how to organize one’s time and energies most effectively—all these become decisions beyond the capacity of a single individual to make. On the other hand, these same individuals can find the discipline of the party constraining or “bureaucratic”

unless they are constantly internalizing through criticism and self-criticism the urgent necessity for a highly organized, disciplined structure as the key to black liberation at this stage. (9)

Now, who are or what are these “cadres” that We place so much emphasis on? Why are they so important?

We must first note that party cadres are clearly distinguished from the rank and file party members. In other words, while every party cadre is a party member, not every party member is a party cadre. Cadres are those party members most responsible for the organizational fulfillment of the party line. They are the core of the party, its cementing foundation.

Membership in the party may, for example, be open to everyone who is recommended by at least two party members, who accept the party constitution and the party rules, and who joins and works in at least one of the party organizations (e.g., the party’s armed organization, a party committee or a party-led mass organization). However, party cadres are those party members who, on the basis of their experience and training, have been appointed by the party to perform functional (leadership) roles, and/or to train other party members—they don’t walk in off the streets and have major responsibilities placed in their laps.

Because cadres undergo an all-round development, they are multi-dimensional, i.e., they’re not simply followers who would be lost if the “head” of the party were cut off by the state. While all party members are encouraged to “specialize” in fields of work, through the division of labor, party cadres must be CAPABLE of “doing everything,” i.e., skilled in the implementation of party tactics in whatever form of struggle they may be required to participate. Ideally, so long as one cadre survives, the party survives, because the party can’t be destroyed so long as qualified cadres remain in the field and maintain their commitments to themselves, to the party, the people, and to the struggle, thus ensuring the continuity of the party and its activities.

Also not that We use the term “cadre” to refer to an individual member of the party. Many people still use the term in the old (W. European) sense, when it described a group or collective “framework.” The term/concept underwent change as revolutionaries in this century critically reappraised and redefined it on the basis of their experience.

Russian and Chinese revolutionaries, for example, first used the term “cadre” in a collective/framework sense, then in an individual sense, as the conditions under which they struggled forced many cadres to work independently of other members or leading party organs—especially during those periods when the party was under attack, and for those cadres (as in China), doing work in the cities and forced to maintain a low profile while organizing the masses. Many people also initially believed that the vanguard party was a force that would spontaneously emerge from within the revolutionary class. Both Lenin and Mao, each in their respective movements (Lenin during late 19th and early 20th century, Mao during the Yenan period) fought for a position which held that the vanguard had to be developed, i.e., “created, trained, and cultivated.” Thus, today cadres undergo a process of selective recruitment, training, assignment, etc.—in short, cadre development—in process of struggle, based on the fulfillment of the revolutionary tasks for each period.

We saw above that cadres must be equal to their tasks in each period with regard to their number, quality, and composition. We also say that the tasks emerge on the basis of the line for the period. To get an example of what it means for cadres to be equal to their tasks in terms of number: The line tells us that We must re-build, under conditions of “illegality,” in an “all-round” way (the tasks). Since the party must function under repressive conditions, the proportion (number) of cadres to non-cadre party members must be greater. Repression forces the increased need for “professional” revolutionaries—even (especially) on the “mass front.” If the mass front is the most open, the most vulnerable, and has inevitable traces to more critical levels, then surely We want our party members working on this level to be capable of working among the masses, while also “avoiding the secret police,” and performing their tasks without drawing roadmaps detailing the organization and its supporters.

We should also note that aside from the proportional relation of cadre to non-cadre members, We need a sufficient number of cadres so that necessary attention can be given to all tasks, and that the development of all work proceeds as evenly as possible. That is, We are responsible for serving the people in all spheres of their lives, and for the conduct of struggle in all fields. Some bloods act and think as though the only pressing needs We have are those related to the military field, or to the organization of our youth; some of us focus our attention on issues in our local areas, not always recognizing that We must develop the struggle as evenly as possible wherever our people are. This not only forces us to recognize the need for a nationally organized and coordinated (communicating) party, but for cadres, in sufficient number, who “specialize” in a wide variety of tasks. Again: While no single cadre should attempt to perform too many tasks at any one time, each cadre should be CAPABLE of performing any task, in any form of struggle in which they’re called upon to participate.

One of the ways to insure that We have cadres with these capabilities is that We not only bring into the party people with a wide assortment of skills, but that We bring into the party people from a wide variety of backgrounds, i.e., people from different classes and strata. As We said, cadres must be equal to their tasks as regards composition. Our tasks require that We work among the masses, i.e., people of all classes and strata. however, our tasks, our line, our ideology, also require that the party be primarily composed of cadres and other members from the working class, and who have a working class stand or worldview.

One description of the needed qualities of cadres is as follows:

They must be cadres and leaders versed in Marxism-Leninism, politically farsighted, competent in work, full of the spirit of self-sacrifice, capable of tackling problems on their own, steadfast in the midst of difficulties and loyal and devoted in serving the nation, the class, and the Party. It is on these cadres and leaders that the Party relies for its links with the membership and the masses, and it is by relying on their firm leadership of the masses that the Party can succeed in defeating the enemy. Such cadres and leaders must be free from selfishness, from individualistic heroism, ostentation, sloth, passivity, and sectarian arrogance, and they must be selfless national and class heroes; such are the qualities and style of work demanded of the members, cadres, and leaders of our Party.(10)

Aside from the insight provided by Mao's description, We can say that the qualities of our cadres, in whatever period of struggle, can be listed as:

- 1) loyalty to the ideals of independence and socialism;
- 2) loyalty to the interests of the vanguard class and the nation;
- 3) loyalty to the party and its line;
- 4) a severe sense of organization and organizational discipline;
- 5) close contact with the masses;
- 6) an ability to independently fulfill all assigned tasks—to organize the fulfillment of the party's line, by using accumulated experience, and improving upon it.

Cadres acquire these qualities through the process of their development in six basic areas: 1) recruitment; 2) training; 3) appointment; 4) fostering; 5) promotion; 6) appraisal and evaluation.

The process of cadre development (training) involves study and struggle with respect to:

- 1) the theory of national liberation revolution—in general, and with regard to New Afrika in particular;
- 2) the theory of the party (in and out of power); a) in general, and with regard to the practical experiences of others; b) with regard to previous New Afrikan experience; c) with regard to the present role of the party in the national liberation revolution, under conditions of our struggle for state (political) power;
- 3) the theory of the state (bourgeois and revolutionary/socialist), in general, with regard to the practical experiences of others; with regard to creation of the New Afrikan socialist republic, e.g., the party/movement as “state in process”;
- 4) the theories of “collective mastery” and “socialist humanism”;
- 5) the theories of socialism and communism, in general, and with specific regard to New Afrika;
- 6) the theory of social development (i.e., dialectical-historical materialism), with emphasis on the Afrikan roots of both dialectical and materialist philosophy;
- 7) theories of communal and private ownership (i.e., political economy);
- 8) theories regarding a) organization; b) criticism and self-criticism; c) democratic centralism; d) collective leadership; e) party-army relations; f) party-mass relations (including united fronts; g) mass line; h) protracted war; i) “public clandestinity”.

Although these notes merely outline the proposed policy for cadre selection and development, they go a long way toward providing building blocks.

Re-Build!

1. Message To The Black Movement, Coordinating Committee, Black Liberation Army, 1975.
2. What Is To Be Done?, V.I. Lenin.
3. Selected Works, Vol. 1, Mao Tse-Tung.
4. "Some Problems of Cadres and Organization," This Nation and Socialism Are One, Le Duan.
5. Le Duan.
6. Le Duan.
7. "So That We Don't Fool Ourselves—Again: Notes on a Movement Policy for Secure Communications," Study Notes On Secure Communications, Seldom Seen.
8. Le Duan.
9. "The Role of the Vanguard Party," Monthly Review, April, 1970. James and Grace Lee Boggs.
10. "Win The Masses In Their Millions," Selected Works, Vol. 1, Mao Tse-Tung.

ON WHAT IT MEANS TO “RE-BUILD”

Part One: Re-Orientation

- Introduction
- “The Beat” Goes On
- The Need For And Role Of A Party
- Study Groups, What We Study, And Why
- Philosophical Re-Orientation
- Ideological And Theoretical Re-Orientation
- Re-Orientation Toward The Conduct Of Daily Struggle:
From Reform To National Liberation Revolution

Introduction

After revolution has failed, all questions must center on how a new revolutionary consciousness can be mobilized around a new set of class antagonisms that have been created by the authoritarian reign of terror...How do we raise a new revolutionary consciousness against a system programmed against our old methods?...At which level of social, political and economic life should we begin our new attack? (1)

The slogan “Re-Build” was adapted from the slogan “Build To Win.” By adapting a new slogan We aren’t saying that We must not continue to build to win. The new slogan calls attention to a new season of struggle. In recognizing the existence of a new season, We must recognize changes that have taken place over the years. Some of these changes have been sudden, and some have been gradual and nearly imperceptible. All the changes have been fundamental, and their effect has been a break in our continuity—philosophical, ideological, organizational. The momentum that had been generated by our practice under the slogan “Build To Win” was interrupted in a QUALITATIVE way. Regenerating our momentum, therefore, has to be done on entirely new philosophical, ideological, and organizational foundations.

We can’t begin to build a new formation—a new armed party—until We know that We must, until We realize that We’re now standing in the middle of a pile of ideological, political and organizational debris. Once the need to re-build is recognized, We must then reach clear, commonly-held vision on what it means to “re-build,” and on how it should be done.

When We say to each other that re-building (building a new, armed, party) is a “process,” our first concern is that We speak the same language. That is, We must share a consciousness and an interpretation of words, concepts, and experiences. If We don’t speak the same language, then “process” may mean one thing to you, and another thing to me. Consequently, if We don’t share the meaning of the words/concepts, our practice will be different.

We must have a minimum level of shared understanding of, and commitment to the dialectical materialist philosophical world outlook merely in order to begin to perceive and conceive the re-building process. We must have a minimum level of shared

understanding of revolutionary scientific socialist methodology and tactical principles (e.g., on what a party is, on what a party does and how it does it; on how to determine friends from enemies and how to unite with friends and when to struggle with them; on how to define OUR politics and therefore know which politics to keep in command and how to do it, etc.). All this and more constitute pre-requisites for initiating the re-building process, for being able to follow through on it with consistency in our theory and practice, and to assure ourselves that not only will We build, but that We'll surely win...

We do not claim that Marx knew or Marxists knew the road to socialism down to the last detail. It would be nonsense to claim anything of the kind. What we know is the direction of this road, and the class forces that follow it; the specific, practical details will come to light only through the experience of the millions when they take things into their own hands. (2)

We don't claim to propose a ready-made scheme for the development of the new formation, because its specific features will be a result of the ideas and work of many people who feel a need for it and who make a commitment to build it. In general, however, We can say that: The re-building process begins with an extended period of "rectification" or what We most often call re-orientation. It's on the foundation created by/through re-orientation that the re-organizational aspect of re-building rests. We think of re-organization itself as having two aspects: 1) not a simple modification of an existing organization, but the creation of "many out of one"—the creation of at least one New Afrikan communist formation out of a presently ideological and organizational heterogeneous movement...and the creation of a front for the liberation of New Afrika; 2) on the basis of new bearings, the emergent New Afrikan communist formation rethinks its organizational science, and builds a new-style organizational unity, cemented by ideological unity. We have a need for a party formation and practice, for consistent ideology, for a structure that's consistent with both survival and political effectiveness in a free fire zone.

“The Beat” Goes On

1. In Book Eleven of VITA WA WATU, We reprinted three speeches that were delivered by Fred Hampton (Chairman of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party) shortly before he and Mark Clark (of the Peoria, Illinois, Chapter of the Party) were assassinated in Chicago on December 4, 1969. In one of those speeches, Fred refers to “the people beat.”

On one level, “the people beat” is the life-rhythm of the masses, the pulse of their activity, the resounding declaration of the conscious motion of the people in all the varied forms and fields of the struggle to maintain their existence, and to see their lives go forward VIA the national liberation process.

However, “the people beat” also expresses itself on a higher and more concentrated level. An example of this higher level is given when Fred said that the beat “started” in October, 1966, when the Black Panther Party (BPP) was organized in California; it “started” again in November, 1968, when the Illinois Chapter of the BPP was organized. In this respect, “the people beat” expresses itself through the party, i.e., the organized concentration of the most conscious, active, and committed SECTION OF THE PEOPLE and the revolutionary class: “Chairman Bobby Seale says that as long as there’s black [New Afrikan] people, there’ll always be a Black Panther Party. But they can never stop the Party unless they stop the beat. As long as you manifest the beat, we can never be stopped.” (3)

As We know, the BPP was stopped; it’s no longer an active, organized formation in the socio-political struggle of New Afrikan people. Nevertheless, “the beat” goes on! As long as there’s New Afrikan people, who struggle against national oppression and oppression in all other forms, there’ll be a need for the higher expression of “the people beat,” i.e., a need for a party—the materialization of the principle that the most conscientious and committed section of the people must organize to represent their interests, in place of, and in opposition to, all forces that would seek to deny the realization of our interests.

2. Although the BPP is no longer on the set, this only means that one particular FORM of the party (principle) was unable to sustain itself while waging a just, necessary, and unique for of the national liberation revolution against the u.s. of a. It’s precisely because the people continue to manifest “the beat”—but without an organized, concentrated expression in the form of a vanguard organization—that the question of the party is of primary concern to us, i.e., one of the first subjects around which We must re-orient our thinking.

That there are conscious New Afrikans willing to address this question and all its implications is evidenced, for example, in the growing number of those now discussing the need for a New Afrikan communist party, and who believe that such a party is the PRECONDITION for successful New Afrikan national liberation revolution.

Although such discussions are now quietly going on, there are no illusions that a viable party can, will, or should be built “overnight.” It’s understood that the party must be suited to our unique conditions and tasks; that its new structure, thought and practice, should be influenced by the lessons acquired from analyses of previous experiences; that it should incorporate those characteristic features of revolutionary parties in other countries which have proven to be essential and relevant, despite differences in

time and place; that building the needed type of party is a complicated PROCESS which must be undertaken consciously and systematically, without skipping any fundamental steps.

The Need For And Role Of A Party

...the existence of a political vanguard precedes the existence of any of the other elements of a truly revolutionary culture. (4)

3. We aren't gonna take up space here as if We're engaged in a debate over the need for a party. For us, the need is a foregone conclusion. At the moment, We're concerned with increasing our understanding of the concept and role of the party, so that We can begin in earnest to build it, to link it with the people, to use it to secure national independence and the construction of socialism.

However, while not debating the question, some attention must be given to the matter of "need." We can't fully comprehend what a party is, what it does, why, and how it fulfills its role, without touching "the need for" the party.

4. It could be argued that the need for a party would be proven best by simply taking a look at the state of the nation and of the New Afrikan Independence Movement; the conditions of the people should be convincing arguments for the need for a party. However, if We were to make such an argument, We'd need more than "objective reality" to support it, because We need an "ideal," i.e., scientific abstractions of the character of the party and how it would affect the present reality, how it would be used to help consciously shape the future. Those who already say they need a party can do so because they have some idea as to what a party is and what it's capable of accomplishing. On this basis, We can look at the present state of the movement and contrast the ideal with the present reality.

Another way to make or to support an argument on the need for a party, is to use the lessons of the past experience. We can look to previous stages and periods of struggle and focus on the role of the conscious, organized formations, i.e., weigh the gains achieved by those formations against what was or wasn't achieved by the unconscious or unorganized masses. In this way We'd see the advantages to having an organized vanguard. We'd also focus on how the conscious and organized formations were able to accomplish their goals (i.e., their thought, organizational structure, and manner of practice), why and how internal factors contributed to their ability or inability to accomplish their goals, and why practically all past formations were short-lived.

Let's make a few quick points on what a party is and why WE need one, then move to other quick points on certain elements of the party-building process, as seen from our perspective.

5. A revolutionary party is the ideal organizational form for representing and realizing the interests of revolutionary classes and oppressed nations seeking independence and socialism. With some qualification, Lenin can be quoted on this point:

In a society based upon class divisions, the struggle between the hostile classes is bound, at a certain stage of its development, to become a political struggle. The most purposeful, most

comprehensive and specific expression of the political struggle of classes is the struggle of parties. (5)

We mention the need for qualifying the above (the need for some re-orientation) because New Afrikans aren't merely conducting struggle in our own society, i.e., the haves against the have nots, or the New Afrikan proletariat against the New Afrikan bourgeoisie. Ours is primarily a struggle between our society and another—the u.s. of a. Although We'll discuss "class" in greater detail, here We must say that "class divisions" exist inside our own society INDEPENDENTLY of those inside the u.s. of a. Moreover, "class divisions" actually characterize the contradiction between New Afrika and the united states, i.e., We stand to each other as "hostile classes" — groups with opposing interests—though generally considered as oppressed, and oppressor, nations. (6)

As We've said before, when it was suggested to us that imperialist oppression is "class oppression manifesting itself on a national level" — under imperialism, entire nations become "classes," and the people of the oppressed nation carry on a common battle against the oppressor nation.

From this perspective, the struggle between oppressed and oppressor nations is, from the very beginning, a "political" struggle, i.e., a struggle between two social formations with qualitatively distinct sets of politico-economic interests, even though the interests of the oppressed nation are suppressed and distorted (thus, the oppressed nation's struggle to free the process of its development)...

Nevertheless, whether the form of oppression is colonial or neo-colonial (i.e., where, under the latter, distorted and suppressed formation of classes exist), the nation requires a 'purposeful, comprehensive' organization to properly conduct its struggle against the empire and against the suppressed-but-harmful bourgeois presence within its own social structure.

6. The party is the ideal organizational form for representing and realizing the interests of the nation and the vanguard class, because it differs fundamentally in its character from all other forms of organization used by the masses. Other forms of people's organization generally concentrate on single issues or fields of social activity (e.g., defense committees, educational, housing or health care organizations, labor unions, youth organizations, etc.).

The New Afrikan vanguard party, however, is responsible for serving the needs of ALL the people; it must demonstrate its leadership in ALL areas of social life by leading and coordinating all mass organizations, by articulating the national interests and those of the revolutionary and progressive class forces, and by showing the best ways to realize these interests. For example, the best way to end colonial violence is to liberate the nation—not by asking the oppressor to appoint a special prosecutor or to integrate the police force. By pursuing the latter courses We're in fact, as Malcolm would say, trying to crawl back on the plantation, rather than struggle for genuine national liberation. And, even though the best way to end colonial violence is a long range goal, it's one that We must keep out front as We struggle from day-to-day; this prevents us from getting diverted, it's how We raise consciousness and help the people to learn from their own experiences, since the lessons don't just fall from the sky.

7. The party is the highest expression of the revolutionary consciousness of the nation and of its vanguard class, and a graphic example of their willingness and their ability to organize, i.e., the party IS the people, and when it organizes, it becomes a

manifestation of the people's self-consciousness and self-organization.

The organized vanguard/party also becomes a manifestation of the unity of the immense and varied resources of the people, i.e., the composition of the party includes representatives of all the nation's classes and strata, all seeking to satisfy their particular and general interests. The unified and active party demonstrates the people's skill in coordinating and executing complex and diverse forms of struggle in all spheres of social life.

8. The party is the ideal people's instrument for seizing and securing state (political) power. In the struggle against the u.s. empire, in the New Afrikan struggle for national independence and socialist development, We must forge weapons that are capable of helping us satisfy our needs. We need to end the domination of the nation by an oppressive settler-colonial state, and to establish a new, independent state power of our own. The revolutionary party is the instrument most suited for the accomplishment of this task:

...What few people realize is that until 1917 Lenin rarely addressed himself to a mass audience, either in writing or speaking, nor appeared on the public platform. Instead, he concentrated his extraordinary abilities and energies on the task which he had concluded was decisive to the success of the Russian Revolution: the building of an apparatus of dedicated, disciplined revolutionists to lead the masses in the struggle for power.

For the revolutionary movements developing today in every country, the great contribution of Lenin was the clarity with which he put forward and acted upon his fundamental convictions regarding the vanguard party: 1) that the purpose of a revolutionary party is to take absolute power in order to revolutionize the economic and social system as the only way of resolving fundamental popular grievances; 2) that it is absolutely essential to build a revolutionary vanguard party if you are not just playing with the phrase; and 3) that a revolutionary party can only be built by a) unceasing ideological struggle, b) strict discipline, c) organized activity of every member, and d) merciless self-criticism. (7)

An understanding that the party has this purpose—the creation of independent state power—is something that members and cadres must have from the very beginning. Sharing this understanding with the masses is a fundamental task of the party, because without it the struggle for “democratic rights” can be easily mistaken as the goal, i.e., NATIONAL liberation becomes mere “liberation”—a euphemism for integration and neo-colonialism.

It can even be stated another way: The full and genuine attainment of “democratic rights”...for people's of oppressed nations, is totally unrealizable so long as the nation is dominated by capitalist-imperialism. And, in its

struggle to free itself from imperialist domination, the nation uses the struggle for “democratic rights” to arouse and unite all those who are genuinely opposed to imperialism, while also isolating and “paralyzing” all those who are not opposed to imperialism. And this is accomplished through the ideological and organizational leadership of the New Afrikan working class, in alliance with other revolutionary and progressive forces.

The struggle to realize the “democratic revolution” demands that we be aware at all times of the nature of each class force and of the class nature of the “democratic revolution” in general, which is bourgeois in character, and expressed by the fact that inside the nation there are those who are both incapable and unwilling to abandon capitalism, even though they are compelled by the strength of the revolution to feign a nationalist attitude. (8)

In the struggle for national independence, i.e., independent state power, the party is an instrument of the people used to help them become CONSCIOUS of themselves as an OPPRESSED NATION, and to organize and struggle AS A NATION. The party is also an instrument of the vanguard class, used to help it become more conscious of its responsibilities for the short and long term realization of the interests of the entire nation.

9. We need a party because the national liberation struggle can't be regenerated in a spontaneous manner, nor can it maintain its continuity without the structure and coordinated activity of a revolutionary party.

Relatedly, this role of the party can't be performed until that conscious and committed section of the people that will become the party, abandon what Lenin called “aristocratic anarchism,” i.e., ideological confusion and organizational segmentation or “tribalism”. In this respect, Lenin's characterization of the party as ‘the sum total of diversified organizations’ can be instructive. Rather than continuing to exist as a dis-united or loose federation of “circles,” “collectives,” or “tribes” linked by little more than a system of general beliefs (e.g., the need for armed struggle), the truly serious unite on the basis of ideological clarity and organizational discipline and division of labor...

Study Groups, What We Study, and Why

10. We must start somewhere. If necessary, or desirable, even one person can begin to build an act, using a program of study as foundation and guide to practical action. Usually, two or some few more begin to build and act, using a program of study as foundation and guide. Rather than call them mere “study groups,” it may be better to refer to them as “study and struggle” groups, because we seek to gradually involve the members of these groups in various forms of struggle.

Our “study and struggle” groups must have clearly stated purposes and aims. For example, we are NEW AFRIKANS—something that a group can take as its object of study and as the issue around which it begins to link itself with the masses. However, each group should have a general and a particular program, i.e., one program to ensure an even ideological and organizational development, and another program structured

around the particular area of struggle that the group will pursue. Not everyone can or should pick up the gun. While the gun can protect, it also needs protection. Party members and cadres should be wherever there are people; some members and cadres must serve the party by doing “nothing but” raising funds, carrying messages, or conducting research on any number of issues, while others have particular responsibilities in other areas of struggle. And, at bottom, there are no “best” or “worst” jobs; the person carrying the gun is no more important than the person carrying the message. Or, as Amilcar Cabral once said: “Between [a person] carrying a gun and another carrying a tool [of labor], the more important of the two is [the person] with the tool. We’ve taken up arms to defeat the Portuguese, but the whole point of driving out the Portuguese is to defend [the person] with the tool.” The people are the real heroes. The more We understand, act on, and spread this concept, the less isolated We’ll be from the masses and the closer We’ll be to an effective mass movement.

Philosophical Re-Orientation

11. Because the party must involve itself in and coordinate and direct diverse forms of struggle around various and complex issues, members and cadres must have more than just enthusiasm, initiative, or a willingness to “get down.” We must be able to make detailed investigations of political, economic, and military matters and be able to analyze, plan, and make adjustments as changes occur. In short, cadres must have knowledge, understanding and vision...philosophy, ideology, and theory—essential elements in the party building process, since it’s these that the party uses to base its policies and to guide its actions.

Philosophy—dialectical and materialist—is definitely one subject that all party members and cadres must study. As We study the subject, We must keep in mind that We don’t wanna merely learn by rote, because We must learn so that We may teach. Moreover, what We teach must be a synthesis of universal principles, and principles or philosophical premises which arise on the basis of our unique conditions and experience.

In the real world, philosophies have unique expressions, because their determining elements are the concrete, social/historical realities of the peoples who produce them. Therefore, it’s no accident that Marx, Engels, and others who perpetuate their particular perspective, begin their introductions to dialectical materialist philosophy by pointing to Greece—the foundation of Western civilization.

Along this line, therefore, We pick up George G.M. James’ STOLEN LEGACY (see list at end of these notes) BEFORE We pick up Marx, Engels, Lenin, or anyone else who claims that Greek philosophy was ‘the first to explain nature from nature itself, from the laws inherent in matter...The first naive form of materialism...simultaneously a spontaneous dialectical concept of the world...to contain in embryo, in the nascent state, almost all later modes of outlook on the world...the first to rise to the level of the rational world outlook.’ (9) We must combat “ideological imperialism” in whatever form, stemming from whatever source.

We believe that as New Afrikans—especially as New Afrikan communists—We must know the truth relative to Lenin’s assertion that the philosophical component of Marxism is “the continuation of the teachings of the greatest representatives of philosophy.” (10) These representatives appeared first in Afrika, not in Greece, e.g. “...Pythagorean mathematics, the theory of the four elements of Thales of Miletus, Epicurean materialism [upon which Marx wrote his thesis], Platonic idealism, Judaism, Islam,

and modern science are rooted in Egyptian cosmogony and science..." (11)

Moreover, our studies of the history and content of dialectical materialism as articulated by others will enable us to then more properly write this history, and to do for Afrikan and world mythology and cosmogony what Europeans have done for the Greeks, i.e., uncover the elements of naive, nascent dialectical materialism. (For example, when George G.M. James describes "the Unmoved Mover," We see here an Afrikan attempt to "explain nature from nature itself"; to explain the cause of the world as originating from within the world, and not from outside it; We see the naive and nascent concept of the self-motion of matter, etc.)

12. What is philosophy, and why is it an important element of the party-building process?

It may or may not be enough to say that philosophy is the process of cognition; one of the forms of social consciousness; the science of the general laws of the relation between being and thinking, objective reality and ideas. Assuming We had the ability, We don't have the time, here, to define philosophy to everyone's satisfaction. Our purpose here is to impress upon you the need to study dialectical materialist philosophy and the story of its development; to grasp the intimate relation between this study and your practice in whatever field, your thinking at each moment. We believe that much of the shortcoming of previous periods and organized forces can be traced in large part to a failure to grasp this relation and devote study to the subject.

The second step in our orientation on this level begins by abandoning the bourgeois concept of philosophy as a more-or-less purely speculative activity, carried on by "specialists," unconnected to—and imposed from outside upon—the daily life of the people.

The revolutionary concept of philosophy holds that it is a conception of the world which includes all attitudes and beliefs commonly held by groups, strata, classes, and nations. Philosophy is the way We perceive, define, project the relation between the phenomena of nature and of society, of the relation between nature and society, and of the way change and development occurs in nature and society.

All of us have a conception of the world—a philosophy—and it doesn't originate outside our material reality, but arises as a result of our efforts to answer the questions and to solve the problems that We confront in our daily activities. Therefore, philosophy is a very concrete and practical activity, undertaken by each of us, and not merely by specialists.

Understanding the practical nature of philosophy is one of the first steps toward preparing a society for protracted people's war, and in the development of a revolutionary conception of the world and social change. Once the practical nature of philosophy is understood, We begin to see that the major difference between the "specialists" and the masses, is that the conception of the worlds held by the former is more systematic than that held by the masses, and the "specialists" are more conscious of the relation between their ideas and the material reality that gives rise to these ideas.

So again, simply stated, philosophy is what you deal with whenever you think, whenever you attempt to solve a problem, to seek the truth, to make a plan of action, to analyze the success and/or failure of your actions, to adjust ideas so that they may conform to your anticipated results...If We can understand this, then We can easily grasp why the study of philosophy and its skillful and creative use can/must become a powerful weapon of practical struggle.

13. Why is the study of dialectical materialist philosophy important to the party-building process? To the effectiveness of the party's practice among the masses? Why is it important to the development of revolutionary consciousness among the masses and for their mobilization toward the development of the new society?

In the past, many of us came to hold philosophy and other "abstract" and intellectual activities in low regard after reading, for instance, the eleventh of Marx's THESES ON FEUERBACH: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." Some of us held that "action makes the front" and not thought or words, and that "practice is the ultimate criterion of truth."

The determination of the truth or falsehood of ideas does depend upon practice. However, practice must realize ANTICIPATED results, and reflect the accuracy with which IDEAS correspond to objective reality: "From living perception to abstract thought and from this to practice—such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality." (12) Therefore, action without thought is not only blind, but impossible, since thought is to action what motion is to matter. Practice can't be used to determine truth without a prior construction of thought based on our concept of the relation between thinking and being, i.e., philosophy...

As for the eleventh THESES...our reading of it puts the locus on the word "only," which implies that We must interpret the world, but not stop there—We must link thought with practice.

The whole situation can be reduced to a minority ruling clique engaging the people's vanguard elements for control of the masses.

The ruling clique approaches its task with a "what to think" program; the vanguard elements have the much more difficult job of promoting "how to think". (13)

Colonial violence, joblessness, homelessness, health care, expropriations, union organizing, morality and ethics—no matter what the issue, We can relate it to philosophy. Revolutionary parties, their members and cadres, must have a firm grasp on philosophy in order to effectively work among the masses, to resolve contradictions of the most concrete, immediate nature.

Moreover, the grasp of philosophy—of "how to think"—is necessary because We must wage ideological battles as well as military ones. We must combat ideas, and We must promote new ideas and struggle to turn them into material forces.

The enemy uses ideas as well as military force to maintain the oppressive relation. Ideas are created and manipulated to turn us against ourselves. What are ideas? Where do they come from? How are ideas changed? How are bad ideas overcome and replaced with correct ones? Is support for Wilson Goode a bad idea? Is independence and socialism for New Afrika a correct idea? How do We convince the masses?

14. The philosophy held by the party is its basis for: 1) understanding the world; 2) drawing conclusions from experience; 3) defining its aims; 4) defining methods of struggle; 5) enlightening, influencing, and winning over the masses; 6) organizing and guiding the masses. To accomplish all this, the party must have a coherent worldview—one which it "gets from the masses," works out systematically, and shares with the masses:

Marxist philosophy itself must be seen as a collective activity, involving not only the dissemination of ideas from above, but also the extension of critical intellectual activity, in close links with the political practice of the movement, among ever-broadening sections of the population. (14)

Independence and socialism for New Afrika are highly unlikely unless the struggle for them is lead by cadres who competently use the weapon of materialist dialectics, and who:

...work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace, in other words, to give a personality to the amorphous mass element. This means working to produce...intellectuals of a new type which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them to become, as it were, the whalebone in the corset. (15)

Ideological And Theoretical Re-Orientation

...A revolutionary party cannot be built on the quicksand of ideological confusion. Obviously there are a lot of people in the black movement whose political positions are dead wrong, and someone has to have the courage to say it, even if it busts wide open the facade of unity. A political split, like a divorce, is often healthier than trying to live together in the same house when you have fundamental differences... There are political differences inside the black movement representing different socio-economic layers inside the black community. It is better to start the vanguard party from scratch with the serious few...than with many assorted persons who are all going in different directions and who are therefore bound to split at the moment of crisis, just when the need is for maximum organizational strength and unity. This does not mean that those who cannot or will not accept the ideology and discipline of the vanguard party cannot play a role in the movement or in concrete struggles for liberation that will culminate in the taking of power. But their place is in the various organizations of mass struggle, not in the vanguard party. (16)

15. Without ideological unity of party ranks on the basic questions of the nature of our struggle for independence, and on the nature of the new society, We'll be unable to insure the ideological unity of the people.

An immediate use for our philosophical categories and premises (especially those drawn from our unique experience) is in the further development of our ideology and theory. In essence, We mean by IDEOLOGY the system of beliefs that are the 'key to our inward identity,' manifesting themselves in our developing political, legal, and economic institutions, our art, morals and ethics—in all manifestations of New Afrikan individual

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and collective life. By THEORY We mean the system of ideas that ties together all aspects of reality, shaping the purposes of our actions and the means used to reach our objectives. (17)

The key to our orientation in this field can be obtained by looking no further back than twenty years ago. As We gained practical and intellectual momentum in building a revolutionary NATIONALIST movement—in developing a revolutionary and nationalist ideology—We lost the initiative in the battle of ideas. Vanguard forces manifested the ideological deficiency in struggle not only against the empire, but also in struggle against pseudo-and-petty bourgeois forces inside the nation. In short, We were unable to overcome the petty-bourgeois tendencies inside our ourselves.

As We studied and struggled, We were unable to maintain a consistency in our practical and intellectual development. We weren't sufficiently in tune with our own NATIONAL experience, and We didn't have a firm grasp on the scientific socialist perspective. Therefore, our failure to sustain the movement on the practical level was/is related to our inability to sustain the development of a uniquely New Afrikan (communist) ideology and theory of struggle.

16. Our ideological battles must concentrate on: 1) strengthening and spreading NATIONAL consciousness, based on reinforcing NATIONAL identity, with the use of materialist dialectics to scientifically ground it; 2) the development and use of ideas to inspire and guide the construction and operation of ideological principles and institutions, i.e., to build revolutionary people's institutions which serve the interests of national and social revolution, VIA protracted, people's war.

At the heart of the ideological battle is the definition of the nature of our struggle, i.e., a struggle for independent state power, as opposed to the neo-colonialist struggle for "empowerment" within the u.s. capitalist system.

Twenty years ago, the high tide of struggle was characterized by a growing mass consciousness—manifested in the ideas being systematized and spread by vanguard forces—of the fundamental contradictions as defined by oppressed and oppressor nations. The masses were beginning to say that their problems couldn't be solved by the u.s. system, and that the system couldn't be merely reformed. This was the underlying essence of "black power," of calls to "take the struggle to the UN.," and of references to the "black nation," to "national liberation," and "self-determination."

Where the u.s. intensified its counter-revolutionary operations, those operations were physical (police and military armed force, counterintelligence, etc.) and also ideological. They sought to undermine, to liquidate, distort, the NATIONAL distinction between New Afrika and the u.s., and they sought to redefine "freedom," to redefine "liberation," to redefine "self-determination," i.e., "black power" became interchangeable with "black capitalism" and petty-bourgeois "empowerment"—the highest manifestation of which, symbolically, is the campaign for the u.s. presidency, where the main obstacle is not mere color, but whether or not one can uphold the interests of u.s. capitalism and imperialist aggression within its borders and around the world.

The empire's effort to liquidate NATIONAL consciousness among New Afrikans and thus to destroy the national revolutionary movement, was aided by bloods inside the nation. This was manifested, for example, by the BPP's move from "revolutionary nationalism" to so-called "intercommunalism," a line which liquidated not only New Afrika, but all other oppressed nations.

Another example is provided by the APP's ideological inconsistency and its later adoption of a "multi-national working class" theory, as it claimed to move "beyond

racism.” (An early example of APP ideological inconsistency is found in Basic Tenets of Revolutionary Black Nationalism, where it’s held, “...The historical question for the Afrikan captive has been twofold. One was his tactics of struggle against the chattel slave system; the other has been his struggle for equality within the capitalist system and his own definition of what he wanted. The first stage took place from 1500 to 1865....” Where’s the inconsistency? 1) There’s never been a “question” for us, only a task, a goal: the struggle to REGAIN our independence as a separate people with interests which oppose those of the empire. A goal for us, is a “question” for those outside the nation who have a different nationality, and/or for those inside the nation who have a different ideology, e.g., the phrase “national question” was coined by people trying to determine what position they would take regarding the struggles of colonized peoples—there was never a “national question” for the colonized peoples themselves! 2) The “Afrikan captive” is not a “he” or a “his”, but a “We”—the nation’s citizens are female as well as male. 3) The New Afrikan struggle to regain independence has taken place in two fundamental stages: a) the stage of colonialism, most commonly referred to as “chattel slavery”; b) the stage of neo-colonialism, from 1865 to the present. 4) During the first stage of struggle, it was essentially a struggle of the whole nation, against the oppressor nation, and for national independence. During the second stage, it has been a struggle for the majority of the nation, against the oppressor nation, for national independence and socialism; and also a struggle of a minority of the nation “for equality within the capitalist system,” and to impose that definition of what they want, upon the majority.)

As another example of bloods aiding the empire through ideological inconsistency, We can cite those such as Imamu Amiri Baraka, who claimed, metaphysically, that ‘black nationalism is a response to white racism,’ thus undermining the legitimacy of New Afrikan nationalism while claiming to use a scientific method of analysis. To conclude that ‘black nationalism is a (mere) response to white racism’ reflects a metaphysical philosophy because it implies that the (internal) development of the nation was caused by an external force. It further implies that the nation’s reality is “accidental” and not the result of the self-motion and continuity of the material conditions of the socio-economic formations on the Afrikan continent which, combined with the consequences of our oppression, form the foundation for the New Afrikan national reality. How many ways can We say it?

A) The process of New Afrikan national development should be analyzed while employing the principles of dialectical materialism, e.g., the law of change of quantity into quality, as NEW Afrika emerges on the North American continent: a Leap occurred, breaking the old qualitative nature of many African nations/tribes—as colonialism (“chattel slavery”) influenced the disintegration of old societies, languages, social relations, and as a new way of life conditioned by colonialism brought us together in a new way; a new NATIONAL identity emerged under conditions of oppression—We could no longer relate to each other as Ibo, Mandinka, etc., and We surely weren’t/aren’t “americans”—We became New Afrikans...

B) The initial error of metaphysical (and mechanical) analyses is the attempt to analyze New Afrikan national oppression without beginning with an analysis of the social reality on the Afrikan continent prior to European contact, and thus to view Africans brought to North America without their own sets of INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS, without our characteristics as wholly formed and active societies that were taken out of our own FREELY DETERMINED histories. Colonized nations have a nature that’s qualitatively

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distinct from colonizing nations; the development of oppressed nations isn't solely determined by the mere external influence and domination of oppressor nations—oppressed nations have 'chemical processes/interactions' of internal elements, the power of "self-motion" shared by all forms of matter, and undergo development that's determined, ultimately, by their own internal dynamic.

The emergence and "history" of New Afrika, as an oppressed NATION, wasn't something entirely imposed upon it from outside itself, nor has the course and rate of the nation's development been solely governed by the empire. The nation has had its own 'inner impulses to development,' its own social productive forces and relations (e.g., "the African culture of the negro slave was totally destroyed") during the Middle Passage and after our arrival on the North American continent. There was a "residue" of these forces and relations, which continued their development, based primarily on their own self-motion, in relation to—and with—the external influence of oppression, e.g.:

—the role of the social productive forces in the development of social relations in continental Afrikan societies, influencing the moves away from communal ownership to private ownership and appropriation, and the emergence of class-based social distinctions. Such development was in process prior to European contact, arising on the basis of conditions peculiar to indigenous social formations. New Afrikan colonial oppression merely manifests the "partial paralysis" of this process, which nevertheless continued to develop under conditions of oppression, but was now distorted as the result of the loss of the FREE OPERATION of the national productive forces;

—the development of class structure in the New Afrikan nation didn't begin on the North American continent, but on the Afrikan continent; the development of productive forces on the Afrikan continent had clearly already reached a level leading to class divisions, e.g., 'the potentiality of such development was already contained in its evolutionary process'

—colonization in the u.s. merely influenced the particular form that class relations inside the New Afrikan nation have taken, and partially paralyzed their "speed" and "course"—which accounts for the existence of MATERIALLY BASED differences in interests among New Afrikans, from the colonial period to the present, i.e., the "integrationist" and the "nationalist trends". Thus, We see the error in the 'nationalism is a response to white racism' line, because it's 1) a misuse of the dialectical materialist philosophy and method of analysis; 2) it reinforces neo-colonialism, distorts and seeks to liquidate the inherent drive toward a renewed/independent national existence derived from the state of independence prior to colonial bondage...

...qualitative character can be explained only by the operation of internal causes; the particular contradictions on which the old quality was based determines what new quality emerges. The external causes affect only the quantitative changes of things—the times and places of their beginning, and the rate at which they proceed. (18)

C) We must study Our Story (“history”), the course of social development of New Afrikan people, with its roots on the Afrikan continent. We must undertake this study with the CRITICAL use of the analytical and philosophical tools provided by dialectical materialism, revolutionary political economy, the sciences of national liberation and socialist revolutions, the world revolutionary process, and the party-building process.

When We begin to study Our Story in this way, We’ll see that the New Afrikan national reality has its roots on the Afrikan continent, since the societies from which We were forcibly taken into colonial bondage (“slavery”) had developed social structures (stratification, classes), political and economic institutions. Despite the damage caused by colonial oppression (“chattel slavery”) to these social and production relations, a sufficient “residue” remained with/among us to serve as the foundation for a NEW Afrikan national reality on the North American continent.

When European nations invaded the Afrikan continent, they invaded independent nations or, socio-economic formations. The invaded Afrikan nations/socio-formations weren’t destroyed, they were transformed and, for those of us forcible brought here, partially transplanted—We had been independent, and were forced into national dependency. Our social and production relations were denied freedom/free development, and as the New Afrikan nation took root on the North American continent, the expression of its social and productive relations were suppressed and distorted.

Enough empirical data remains available to not only study and analyze, but to reinterpret, to formulate and chronicle NEW AFRIKAN “history” rather than amerikkkan his-story in black-face. The contemporary data must also be more correctly used. That is, statistics on New Afrikan unemployment, wage differentials, mortality rates, educational shortcomings, etc. are all data demonstrating the QUALITATIVE DISTINCTIONS between the oppressed New Afrikan nation and the amerikkkan settler-empire.

D) And, who were We? Some of us were “slaves,” wanting “equality with the slavemaster,” while others were Africans, wanting to REGAIN independence. Some of us were “coloreds,” wanting the “freedom” enjoyed by settlers—while others were still Afrikans, wanting “some land of our own.” Some of us were “negroes,” wanting the vote, so We could participate in meaningless elections—while others were still Africans, or New Afrikans, wanting a “Black Belt Republic.” Some of us were “black amerikkkans,” wanting to acquire “black capitalist power” by being allowed “parity” in an alleged pluralistic society—while others were still Africans, or New Afrikans, wanting national liberation and socialism.

E) For nearly four hundred years, New Afrikan (“black”) people have been engaged in a long process of struggle to regain national independence, a process initiated by the onset of European-inspired capitalist-imperialism—the fundamental contradiction between the oppressed New Afrikan nation, and the oppressive settler-empire, now know as the united states of amerikkka. The initial form of the colonial oppression of New Afrikan people is generally known as “chattel slavery.”

But, no matter what particular forms arise to express the struggle, the process doesn't end until the fundamental contradiction is resolved. Ending the process, resolving the fundamental contradiction between New Afrika and the amerikkkan settler-empire, requires independence from capitalist-imperialist relations of all kinds.

Until little more than one hundred years ago, the mass orientation of the process and its movements was clearly based on a nationalist perspective. Essentially, the majority of New Afrikan people defined "freedom" as "some land of our own—and a government of our own."

This nationalist tendency—based clearly on the demands of the fundamental contradiction—has always existed among New Afrikan people. Despite the diversity of its forms and the varying levels of intensity in its expression, it remained dominant among the masses until the end of the war between the united states and the confederacy created conditions which ushered a transition.

The end of this war saw the granting of "formal political independence" to the New Afrikan nation. So-called "emancipation" was our unique experience with neo-colonial oppression and exploitation. The settler-empire deceptively forced amerikkkan citizenship-on-paper upon us, in a way similar to those in which the European colonial powers "granted" citizenship to the peoples of their "overseas provinces."

Also, in a way similar to the imposition of neo-colonial structures elsewhere, so-called emancipation of New Afrikan people formalized the rise to dominance of a tendency which had always existed alongside the mass-based nationalist orientation: the "integrationist" tendency.

Altho capitalist-imperialist oppression continued to characterize the fundamental contradiction facing New Afrikan people, the ideas and programs of the integrationist tendency have dominated or strongly influenced all the movements of the past one hundred years. Underlying the integrationist tendency is the desire to perpetuate capitalist relations, and to become part of amerikkka rather than to undermine it. The integrationists don't oppose the capitalist-imperialist system as such; they're just uptight because they don't get "proportionate share" in the privileges and spoils of empire, and would like to see oppression and exploitation "at home" and abroad take place in a more "humane and democratic" fashion. It's by breaking with this bourgeois tradition that the new movement must show its most distinguishing characteristics.

Just as the New Afrikan struggle for socialism seeks to re-establish in contemporary forms the principles underlying Afrikan communalism, similarly, the new movement seeks to express in contemporary fashion the orientation and style of the nation during the colonial period. The orientation was genuinely nationalist (as opposed to those so-called nationalists who are really ethnic pluralists), and the style was furtive...

Re-Orientation Toward The Conduct Of Daily Struggle:
From Reform To National Liberation Revolution

There are times when it is necessary to develop the cadre and the people by engaging them in certain political struggles to advance their knowledge and develop their talent for engaging the enemy, as well as for leading not-as-yet-engaged sections of the [people] into the fray to strengthen its social forces. In fact, the rhetoric of the...movement today is far beyond its leaders' capacity to produce. This rhetoric not only exceeds the movements' organizational strength and structure to implement. It also tends to disguise the lack of clarity as to the kind of [liberation we] are seeking...

Today...the struggles for...minds require concrete struggles for power to rule over land, goods, and the means by which goods are produced. (19)

17. Clarity as to the kind of liberation We seek/need provides the orientation necessary for engaging in daily struggles around immediate issues, without losing sight of the long range objective. The kind of liberation We seek is NATIONAL liberation.

The struggles for "Freedom, Justice, and Equality," for "Bread, Jobs, and Peace," for "quality education" and adequate health care, are all inspired by the contradiction between the oppressed New Afrikan nation, and the settler-imperialist united states—and the u.s. is unable and unwilling to resolve this contradiction by any means short of prolonged warfare. Unless properly handled, slogans such as "No Justice, No Peace" illustrate our lack of clarity, because they assume that our liberation can be realized within and by bourgeois legality. In a nutshell, the needed orientation for all mass work is this: What the reactionaries call "injustice," etc., is actually part and parcel of the Amerikkkan Way—the only solution is national liberation and socialist revolution.

We recall from Fred's speeches, as he recounted the struggles waged by the BPP around placement of the stop signs: People went through the process of attending futile meetings with officials of the colonial state; they observed the rules and regulations of "legitimate authority," only to have their dignity and self-confidence eroded. Some of the people who go through similar changes give up, having been frustrated once too often. Others continue to go through the motions, primarily because they're presented with no alternative, i.e., no party cadres to show how the people have the power to effect all the needed changes in their lives, and can do so without the intervention of the colonial state apparatus. Such knowledge and experience lends itself toward self-conscious motion seeking to abolish the oppressive state apparatus altogether, and replace it with a revolutionary apparatus truly of, by, and for the people.

However, the people must do more than simply observe and participate—that is, unless We expand our meaning of "participate" so that it includes DIALOGUE, agitation, propaganda, political education...

18. The party must be able to project a vision of the new society, and it must provide the means of materializing that vision, laying the foundation for the new society in the very process of the struggle for national liberation. That is, "freedom" means accep-

tance of responsibility for self and kind; We must begin, in the midst of and as part of the struggle, to assume the responsibility for governing ourselves, for producing and appropriating our material and cultural values.

Our vision must be emphasized in opposition to the imperialist and neo-colonialist perspectives. Our vision demands that We stress the need to establish New Afrikan state power as the PREREQUISITE for the long term resolution of colonial violence, bad housing, miseducation, poor health, no jobs, etc.

At present, the orientation underlying mass struggle is primarily neo-colonialist. We ask the u.s. government to do things for us. Our struggle is AGAINST the u.s. government, to secure the power to prevent it from doing things to us and so that We can do things for ourselves, under our own government.

Each issue that the masses struggle around must be infused (by the people's vanguard) with the idea that none of our problems can be solved until We achieve national independence, when We can then begin to use our human and material resources to build a better life. This means We must continually point to the systems of colonialism and capitalism as the enemy—not mere individuals like Koch or Wilson Goode. It's not revolutionary to merely talk about the "Reagan administration" as the cause of our problems, nor as the source of solutions.

19. Defining the kind of liberation We need starts by distinguishing imperialist and neo-colonialist reforms, from the "democratic" or progressive reforms used by the masses to improve their lives while struggling to establish national independence and socialism.

By imperialist reforms We mean those carried out by the u.s. settler-imperialist state to turn the tide of rising consciousness. The oppressor nation introduces these reforms in an attempt to diminish contradictions and to give the impression of resolving them. Their aim is to preserve and protect the system of oppression, to perpetuate the amerikkkan way.

A revolutionary struggle unfolds steadily in all spheres of social life—political, economic and cultural. Hence, constant success in each area of combat requires the mobilization and organization of the masses to undermine the enemy's successive policies and thwart every one of his schemes and maneuvers. (20)

If We ain't clear on the type of liberation We seek, We can find ourselves pushing for "changes" that, once they occur, will have little or no effect on our fundamental oppression. For example, a "survival program" that serves free breakfast to the children in the community can, if not properly oriented (i.e., if the people ain't politically educated), be mistaken for a goal, an end, rather than a means. In such a case, the enemy destroys the vanguard, and then implements a similar program, serving free breakfast and lunch, and thus giving the impression that there's no need for more radical or revolutionary proposals. The revolutionary orientation that had guided the BPP free breakfast program was liquidated along with the party!

By neo-colonialist reforms We mean those initiated by reactionary forces inside the nation. In effect, the purposes of these reforms is the same as that of the u.s. settler-imperialist state, and those who initiate them are collaborators.

Reactionary forces introduce their reform proposals in an attempt to bring about "change" only within the limits of bourgeois legality and the ideological hegemony of the

empire. They deny the necessity for NATIONAL liberation revolution and socialist development, and consequently their actions create divisions among the masses, sowing confusion and illusions, while also undermining the confidence the masses have in their vanguard forces. The masses want “freedom”—but the reactionaries define freedom one way, while the revolutionary vanguard defines freedom another way; the reactionaries say that freedom can be obtained by “working within the system,” while the vanguard says that real freedom can only be realized by opposing the capitalist-imperialist system—by opposing the u.s., and the “amerikkkan way”—and by establishing New Afrikan state power.

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4. Jackson, p. 37.
5. V.I. Lenin, “The Socialist Party and Non-Party Revolutionism,” Collected Works, Vol. 10.
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7. James and Grace Lee Boggs, “The Role of the Vanguard Party,” Monthly Review, April, 1970.
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13. Jackson.
14. Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, p. 321.
15. Gramsci, p. 340.
16. Boggs’, pps. 18-19.
17. See Notes From a New Afrikan P.O.W. Journal, Book Seven, pps. 39-43.
18. Mao Tse-Tung, “On Contradiction,” Selected Works, Vol. 1.
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ON WHAT IT MEANS TO “RE-BUILD”
Part Two: Re-Organization

- Slogans: Theoretical and Practical Weapons of Struggle
- On “Re-Build”— Metaphorically Speaking
- “Build To Win!”: Looking Back

Slogans: Theoretical and Practical Weapons of Struggle

Every slogan must be deduced from the totality of specific features of a definite political situation. (1)

1. Rectifying our thought, re-orienting our practice, and re-building our organizational structure, are all based, ultimately, on the proper understanding and application of materialist dialectics, even when formulating and using slogans. Although We’re dealing with the particular slogan “Re-Build,” our systematic approach to study and struggle demands that We begin by learning something about slogans in general.

2. Slogans are ideo-theoretical and practical weapons of struggle. In many respects, We should treat them much as We would firearms: Approach them thoughtfully; handle them carefully; learn to break them down, and become familiar with the function and interaction of each part. We shouldn’t form or aim slogans randomly, and We should learn to use them expertly, never allowing ourselves or others to misuse them.

Just as there are different types of weapons, made for use in different situations, so there are different types of slogans. Some slogans are predominantly ideological (e.g., “National Liberation and Socialism”), while others are essentially theoretical, facilitating motion along the path of the movement’s general strategic orientation (e.g., “protracted people’s war”).

Still other types of slogans provide particular strategic and tactical guidance. They sum up and define periods, stages, or issues, and are used to agitate and mobilize the people around these issues. In such cases, slogans outline definite tasks of more immediate nature, and indicate how these tasks should be realized.

Slogans don’t perform their function in a spontaneous way. Just as there must be a “mind behind the gun,” there must be cadres behind the slogans. Just as guns are commanded by politics so they can be loaded, aimed, and fired in the right directions and at the right times, so slogans must be formulated on the basis of correct analyses, so that they can have the proper political content, and can thus be effective within the context of particular situations and still remain consistent with general objectives, i.e., national independence and socialism.

Slogans don’t fall from the sky, and they shouldn’t be pulled from a hat or chosen and used simply because they have a catchy rhythm and rhyme.

Slogans have their foundation in ideological perspective, and in practice. As our practice raises questions, as We become conscious of changes in the course of struggle, We have to thoroughly and scientifically analyze the “totality of specific features of a definite political situation,” (and yet never lose sight of the long range goal and opportunistically abandon that goal for what may appear to be short term benefits).

And, if We formulate slogans to help us meet the demands of definite situations, We have to not only use them as practical weapons, but as ideo-theoretical weapons. That is, the slogans must be interpreted to cadres and to the masses. They must be

tested in practice, enriched, broken down by the basic “mass line” method, until they become material forces, taking on life in the course of strategic and/or tactical day-to-day struggles. (2)

On “Re-Build”—Metaphorically Speaking

We must build to win! (3)

3. The slogan “Re-Build” is an adaptation of the slogan “Build To Win,” (BTW) which was formulated and adopted by the BLA-Coordinating Committee (BLA-CC) as a strategic slogan underlying the Consolidation process begun in the mid-1970s.

“Re-Build” (RB) was formed and first used in 1980 by members who believed that:

1) A qualitatively new period of struggle had developed—a new period needing a new slogan—and the continued use of the slogan “BTW” reflected the failure of the entire movement generally, and of the BLA-CC in particular, to catch up with a reality that had actually been developing since the late 1960s. Further, continued use of “BTW” reflected the movement’s failure and the BLA-CC’s failure to recognize the significance of a series of “recent events” and their relation to the existence of still more fundamentally changed conditions. 2) There was a need to call attention to this new period (through the use of a new slogan), and to begin a conscious and systematic summation of changes in objective and subjective conditions—most of which had clearly manifested themselves by the mid-1970s, but were either unnoticed or not dealt with in a non-compromising manner. 3) There was a need to begin the process of making changes in our thinking (e.g., philosophy, ideology, theory, lines, etc.), in our organizational structure (e.g., party structure, reinforced by ideological unity), and begin re-orientation toward mass-based activity as well as military strategy and tactics, so that all this would begin to correspond to the new conditions and demands of struggle.

4. What are the specific features of the situation that gave rise to the slogan “Re-Build”? Let’s say that in the late 1960s and/or mid-1970s, We decided to build a house (i.e., a movement and/or an organization). This decision is made because: 1) We believe We need a house in order to win...as a prerequisite to success (i.e., the struggle needs an organized movement at its center, and the movement needs an organized party as its center); 2) We must shelter ourselves from the elements, because We can’t win unless We survive.

Now, We decide to build the house, and We begin the construction under the slogan “Build To Win” (or “Consolidation”)—a slogan deduced from the totality of the specific features of the existing situation. The slogan rather straightforwardly says WHAT We must do, and why, but the “how” is very much implied, which can prove to be a problem if not clearly spelled out...Remember, We’re building something which requires a particular kind of design, since it must perform a specific function; and We’re using, to begin with, all kinds of diverse elements...

Nevertheless, We pursue the process, We begin to “consolidate,” to “build to win.” As We do so, We find that We must resolve certain internal contradictions, which are compounded by external elements turning increasingly hostile, e.g., a (quantitative) succession of storms move through which effectively destroy the partially completed house. These storms have also influenced fundamental changes in the internal and external environment, including the top-soil that was the house’s foundation.

Undaunted by all this, We decide to remain steadfast in our convictions and in our

commitment to build a house; We decide to initiate a new phase of construction. However, is “Build To Win” still the appropriate slogan for this new phase of construction?

No objections are made to the assertion that We still need a center for the struggle and for the movement in order to win; no objections are made to the clear fact that We must “build” the center. The main question We must ask, however, is HOW do We build the center/house? or, how do We begin to “re-build”? Seeking the answer to this fundamental question forces us to raise other questions, e.g., why is a new phase of construction necessary? Why was the “old house” unable to resolve certain internal contradictions and unable to withstand the onslaught of the storms?

Remember: the slogan “Build To Win” was formed and used on the basis of particular internal and external, subjective and objective conditions. Those conditions no longer exist. The old slogan was part of a “tool chest” which also contained corresponding levels of philosophical, ideological, and theoretical development...corresponding lines, strategies, etc. — all of which are also no longer appropriate to the new conditions and requirements. We can’t — and don’t want to — attempt to continue to building the house that has proven itself incapable of resolving its internal contradictions or of withstanding the onslaught of severe storms.

Under new conditions, in view of new tasks, and guided by new insight as to the causes of our shortcomings, it’s not a matter of simply trying to go on as before, as if nothing has happened. Nor is it a matter of merely picking up the damaged pieces of the old house and trying to fit them all together again.

Once you begin to raise questions on why the old house was unable to stand, you confront matters of design (structure), of the quality and composition of the materials used, of the (ideological) compatibility of materials. You gradually realize that you must build a NEW house, on new ground, with a new design, with materials of a different composition and quality, which must from the very beginning be compatible—all so that the new process of organizational consolidation will have increased chance of success.

“Build To Win”: Looking Back

5. By the mid-1970s, We were a “people’s vanguard” trying to conduct a people’s war without the people. The BLA-CC became a vanguard without a rearguard, because it hadn’t assumed total responsibility for the political as well as the military activity of the masses—just as it had left the sphere of providing a base for its own support by the masses, to forces outside its ranks. When the “Call to Consolidate” was issued, some efforts were made to correct this situation. However, these efforts failed for the very reason they were undertaken, i.e., the lack of ideo-political development and unity prevented us from making the political and structural changes necessary to take a leap in our thought and practice.

We can begin to learn what it means to “re-build,” and something of why the old house was unable to stand, by looking backwards, with the help of hindsight, to several periods of organizational (and movement) development. We will briefly examine some of the key specific features of the conditions underlying the slogan “Build To Win,” and end by contrasting this slogan to “Re-Build.”

The Black Liberation Army is a politico-military organization
whose primary objective is to fight for the independence and

self-determination of Afrikan people in the United States. (4)

From its very beginning, the BLA was beset with contradictions not only over ideology, but over structural form. The definition of a “politico-military” organization relates to both these areas, and has always been approached by two opposing points of view.

To some, a “politico-military” organization is, essentially a “foco,” an organization of urban guerrillas which merely “politically educates” its members. These combatants “fight for political reasons,” but they fight primarily with arms, on the “armed front.” Key to this perspective is its narrow view of “politics” and its one-sided analysis of “armed struggle.” Also characteristic of this perspective is the aversion toward “the party.” In some instances, We could legitimately refer to those who hold this view as “aristocratic anarchists.”

Another view of the “politico-military” organization holds that it’s a form for the vanguard party, popularized by those engaged in people’s wars against imperialist and neo-colonialist domination. The term was brought into popular use during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Regis Debray’s REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION? captured the essence of the international struggle between reform and revolution that was taking place inside the people’s movements and parties. This internal struggle was characterized by the rejection of “a party that has not changed its organizational form and activities to suit the conditions of a revolutionary People’s War.” (5) As summed up by the PFLP:

The theoretical discussion which has for some time been taking place between the revolutionary forces of Latin America...revolves primarily around matters pertaining to the structure of the revolutionary party which will lead the revolution.

The failure of leftist national parties and communist parties in the Arab world, is the failure of these parties themselves—and of their structure, formation, and strategies—and not a failure of the principle of the need for a party as a condition for the revolutionary presence.

The proof is that no revolution in this century has succeeded and continued in triumph, nor has any such revolution achieved radical change in the structure of society, and given new life to the masses, without a party to lead it and provide it with the ideological and social class basis on which it rests and supports itself, so that it is able to continue to exist by virtue of its objective connection with it. (6)

This kind of theoretical discussion was at the center of the contradictions inside the Black Panther Party at the same time as it was occurring on the international level. Some of the arguments from that level were embraced by the “left wing” of the BPP—only We confused our rejection of the leadership and structure of the party, with rejection

tion of the principle of the need for a party. That is, our analyses were one-sided and superficial; We saw only the “rejection of the party” as a principle, and We saw only the “adoption of armed struggle” merely as it pertained to armed actions.

Consequently, when the split occurred in the BPP, the “left wing” made no serious attempt to build a new party, a new form of organization for the people’s vanguard that would be “a sum total of diversified organizations,” leading and coordinating all forms of political, economic, and socio-cultural as well as military struggles. Moreover, this kind of re-organization had to be guided by a re-orientation in our thinking, a rectification and further development of our philosophical perspective, our ideology and theory, our policies and lines. At the time of the split, We confronted external as well as internal contradictions. The repression of the movement and of the BPP was of a qualitative nature, demanding more than mere armed responses by an isolated section of the movement.

The BLA evolved out of the now defunct Black Panther Party...
It was in late 1968 early 1969 that the forming of a black
underground first began... (7)

One of the Rules of the BPP stated that no member of the Party could belong to any military organization other than “the Black Liberation Army”—the party’s own military organization. But, We shouldn’t draw from this that all members of the BLA, in later years were present or former members of the BPP. This fact contributed to the ideological and structural confusion that the Consolidation process was designed, in part, to resolve. Nor should We assume that it was only with the formation of the BLA that an “underground”—even an armed underground—was formed.

The “underground” above refers to what was initially the BPP’s armed organization. It would be an inaccurate and damaging presentation of Our Story to imply that no clandestine activity/movement was undertaken by our people prior to the emergence of the BPP, and that none co-existed with the BLA. In fact, it’s essential that We be clear on the fact that the “underground” has as many different organizations, lines, and independent activists as does the public movement—a malady that continues to plague us.

In 1971 the name Black Liberation Army (or Afro-American Liberation Army), surfaced as the nucleus of black guerrilla fighters across the United States. (8)

Not only was the “underground” movement itself composed of various organizations and independent activists. When the BPP-inspired BLA became widely known and active, many of those who “joined its ranks” did so by merely adopting the name “BLA.” In this sense, rather than being an organization—especially not a homogeneous armed party—the BLA was a “movement,” or a loosely-held “front” that was without a formal structure or program. There was no single philosophy, ideology or theory, no single strategic or tactical lines, embraced by all BLA members. The BLA found its unity around the general belief in “the need for armed struggle”—yet even the definition, the theory for “armed struggle” was up for grabs. Even movements and fronts need structure, otherwise all you have is anarchy—anarchy under the guise of “de-centralization.”

It was generally understood that to become a member of the BLA, one simply had

to be a “black revolutionary.” This may sound good to some, sound acceptable to some; but We must realize that as a people and as a movement, We were still trying to define what it meant to be “black,” as well as what it meant to be a “revolutionary,” e.g., there were “black revolutionaries” who were conscious New Afrikans, who embraced and fought for the national reality, and there were “black revolutionaries” who identified themselves as hyphenated amerikkans and who, in essence, rejected the nation (they use phrases like “black nation,” “colony,” and “black liberation” to euphemistically describe “ethnic pluralism” best given its lead by the Carmichael and Hamilton book on BLACK POWER). This contradiction was manifested even inside the ranks of the BLA-CC, where debate continued to rage over “the land question” and over the formal national identity of the BLA-CC and all its members.

The BLA was a “people’s army,” fighting a war, yet there was no commonly-held vision as to exactly who “the people” were/are (i.e., New Afrikans, or amerikkans), or as to what the war was for (i.e., independence and socialism for New Afrika, or for a “black dictatorship” in a still ‘united’ but socialist amerikkka. Whether or not you’re fighting to establish an independent state, or to establish a “black amerikkkan dictatorship”—these are fundamentally different goals, they involve different theories, different strategies and tactics, and different forms of military and political organization.

We must also keep in mind that the BPP was making changes in its line (e.g., from “revolutionary nationalism” to internationalism and heavy emphasis on JUCHE to inter-communalism). These changes had some influence on the BLA both while it was attached to the BPP and after the split...

From 1969 to 1972 the BPP came under vicious attack by the state...as the means to destroy the aboveground political apparatus who fielded the black underground...By 1971, contradictions perpetuated by COINTELPRO forces in the leadership of the BPP caused the split between Newton and Cleaver, which eventually split the entire Black Panther Party into two major factions...

Prior to the split, the black underground was the official armed wing of the aboveground political apparatus, and thereby had to maintain restraint in its military activity. This was very well for the black underground, because it depended upon the BPP to give leadership and direction. The black underground, although in many areas experienced in tactical military guerrilla warfare, was still infantile politically, and although becoming organizationally welded as a fighting apparatus, it did not establish an infrastructure completely autonomous from the aboveground BPP cadres and Party chapters. This in turn became one of the major detriments of the black underground after the BPP split. (9)

The line “to destroy the aboveground political apparatus who fielded the black underground,” should be read with reference to the entire movement and not merely with reference to the BPP. This is a critical point, and a key to understanding what it

means to re-build: The u.s. government's attack on the "aboveground political apparatus" was an attack upon New Afrikan people as a whole; the empire was striking back at all the developing movements of all its oppressed nations, as well as its own anti-imperialist and communist citizens.

Objectively, the entire movement was being forced underground, We were confronted with the objective conditions that demanded We base all forms of political struggle on the principles and methods of clandestinity. It was at this point that We had the opportunity to take the movement to a higher level. Instead, only the "armed front" attempted to make the leap—but in doing so, it left the people behind.

We had a theory which spoke to the need for a mass line, but our practice wasn't guided by this theory, and We suffered for it. As the "armed front" undertook its activity there was less and less convergence between the interests and actions of the New Afrikan masses, and the interests and actions of the would-be vanguard. We prided ourselves for having "higher levels of consciousness," but ours wasn't the consciousness of the masses, and We didn't know how to link ourselves to them.

At this point, let's also point out that the causes of the split in the BPP rested on its own internal contradictions, e.g., its lack of philosophical and ideological consistency, changes in its theory and line, contradictions between leadership and cadres, and even contradictions between the party and the masses, as its thought and practice began to diverge from the aspirations of the people.

We should also keep in mind that prior to the split, the "official armed wing" of the BPP were, in theory and fact, party members and cadres. In this respect, the contradictions in theory and structure were just as much those of the "armed wing" as those of the "political leadership." In fact, some members of the BLA had actually been the "political leadership" of some BPP chapters. The existence of undeveloped or inappropriate political perspective inside the ranks of the "armed wing" after the split contributed to the incorrect analysis of the relation between covert and overt forms of party (and movement) activity, and thus to incorrect views of the definition of, and the relation between, "autonomous infrastructures" of armed and unarmed units.

For example, compare a reason given for the BLA's inability to develop the subjective capacity for sustained struggle, with a description of its composition and character:

The split and factionalism [of the BPP] prevented adequate logistics and communications between cadres and foco's in the black underground in various parts of the country. It was this situation which caused the greatest problem to the advent of the Black Liberation Army, upon which the commencement of armed struggle could be said to have been premature. Premature in the sense that, subjectively, our capacity to wage a sustained protracted national liberation war was not possible...

With respect to composition and character:

...militants who had not grown to political maturity and without a politico-military structure and strategy to merge the black underground into a national formation, employing both stable and mobile, urban and rural guerrilla warfare, in conjunction with the rising militancy of the oppressed masses. (10)

When We look at these statements together, when We reflect on all that's been said above and on our own experiences, it's clear that our inability to develop the subjective capacity to wage a sustained people's war had far more to do with ideology, line, and structure, than mere inadequate logistics and communications. Why? First, because to speak of logistics and communications is to speak of people, to speak of information and material resources of various kinds which flow through networks that the party—through the armed units—is responsible for creating. The physical construction of these networks can't be separated from their political content.

Further, the lack of adequate logistics and communications can't be oversimplified by pointing to "split and factionalism" unless We look for underlying causes, and then trace these causes through all the interrelated aspects and elements of our thought and practice. In short, We look to the character and composition of the organization. And, the long and short of this is that after the split, the BLA didn't attempt to build a new party, it didn't pursue its development as a "politico-military" organization that would be based in clandestinity, with a strategy and structure allowing it to lead and coordinate ALL forms of struggle, political as well as military. When the BLA began to "build to win," it concentrated on the "armed front" and abandoned the "mass front" to other forces. IN EFFECT, it was as if the Bolsheviks had said they'd build the armed front, and let the Mensheviks build the mass front; as if Mao had said the CCP would build the armed front, and they'd let Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kuomintang build the mass front. There is no way to insure that armed actions will operate "in conjunction with the rising militancy of the masses" unless the vanguard party—the politico-military organization—is leading and coordinating both "fronts"/all forms of struggle.

By late 1971, it was ordered for the black underground to enter a strategic retreat, to reorganize itself and build a national structure; but the call for the strategic retreat for many comrades was too late. Many of the most matured militants were already deeply underground, separated from those functioning with the logistics provided by BPP chapters who in the split served to support armed struggle...In 1974, the Black Liberation Army was without an aboveground political support apparatus, logistically and structurally scattered across the country without the means to unite its combat units, abandoned by euro-amerikkkan armed forces, and being relentlessly pursued by the state reactionary forces... Thus, it was only a matter of time before the Black Liberation Army would be virtually decimated as a fighting-clandestine organization. (11)

If, by 1974, the BLA was without an aboveground support apparatus, it had no one to blame but itself. It had split from the old party, but had failed to rebuild itself as a new form of the party. It had failed to learn to build and to build its own aboveground bases for support—bases with their roots in clandestinity.

A document which captures the thinking and practice of the BLA between 1971

and 1975 (and also set the groundwork for some of the contradictions that were to keep the Consolidation effort off-track) is “Spring Came Early This Year.” The document clearly reflects our one-sided grasp of the theoretical discussions mentioned above over the structure-vs-principle of the party. “Spring...” effectively rejects the party and emphasizes the “foco” and “autonomy.” While it identified the BLA as “the Babylonian equivalent of” the Vietnamese NLF, the Tupamaros, and FRELIMO, it’s clear that not much thought went into the comparisons at the time, and nor was much thought given to re-analyzing “Spring...” and the international experiences in the mid-to-late 1970s. We rejected the party principle, yet compared ourselves to the Vietnamese NLF. The reason could only have been because the NLF was a “front” and had captured our imagination with its armed actions almost a decade earlier. Surely, We didn’t notice that the NLF was effectively built and led by the Vietnamese Communist Party, and that it was more than a mere “armed front” limited to carrying out armed actions. We rejected the party, yet compared ourselves to FRELIMO. Again, the reason could only have been because it was a “front” leading the “armed struggle” of the Mozambiquan people. Surely, We didn’t notice that FRELIMO was, even then, essentially structured as a party, and didn’t limit itself to the “armed front” while expecting forces outside FRELIMO to lead the “mass front” in directions consistent with the revolutionary orientation of FRELIMO. Moreover, if the Vietnamese NLF and FRELIMO can be characterized as We’ve done, they can be contrasted to the Tupamaros, who, it seems, had less of a party structure and program—and who were shortlived.

We saw “armed struggle” one-sidedly and superficially from a theoretical as well as structural standpoint. On one hand, our tendency was to view armed struggle only in terms of armed actions, rather than as “politics with bloodshed,” i.e., a political-social revolution employing armed forms of struggle as well as unarmed forms. On the other hand, We failed to grasp the fact that both forms—armed and unarmed—must be carried out by and under the leadership of a single party organization.

Since We saw “armed struggle” one-sidedly and superficially, We couldn’t help but see all other questions in the same way (this one-sided view being evidence of our inconsistent application of materialist dialectics). What We considered a question of merely developing the most advanced theory regarding the use of arms, was really a demand to develop the most advanced theory on the use of all forms of struggle—to restructure the armed and unarmed movement/organizational apparatus—and to do so from a base in clandestinity. But We didn’t see it this way.

So, while some cadres began to “build the armed front,” We did it in a way consistent with our narrow perspective. The masses needed advanced theory and an organization that would help them apply and further develop it in relation to ALL aspects of their lives. Instead, We drew an artificial line between the masses and ourselves, saying at the time that the “mass front” lacked the capacity and/or willingness to develop and apply theory and program incorporate armed struggle. It’s sad.

How did We expect the mass front to develop this capacity? (The magical powers of the foco would spark consciousness and organization?!) If the mass/political front lacked the capacity to deal properly with the question of armed forms of struggle, then reason seems to say it also lacked the capacity to deal with all other questions and forms of struggle!

Those of us who felt that We alone had the capacity and willingness to build the ARMED front, should have had the same capacity and willingness to rebuild the mass front as well—We should have seen the necessity for assuming this responsibility. In-

stead of restricting ourselves to the attempt to expand and consolidate a “military vanguard,” We should have begun the effort to expand and consolidate the ideological and political vanguard for a new phase of struggle for the entire movement. Not only did We not address ourselves to the “awesome responsibility,” but in the one area We chose to concentrate, We failed to adequately develop and sustain the motion.

And, it couldn’t have been otherwise. For, to adequately develop and sustain motion on the “armed front” We were required to address ourselves to those tasks that We abandoned to the “mass front.”

In order to develop a “clandestine infrastructure” and the genuine capacity for armed struggle, work must be done among and with the masses—only they have the “capacity for armed struggle.” A clandestine infrastructure must be composed of masses of people, the vast majority of whom occupy space on the “mass front.”

In 1975, the call ‘to sort out and consolidate’ was issued, and the Coordinating Committee was formed. However, some members of the BLA declined membership in the new centralized organization—but they continued to function under the name “BLA.” At that point there were two distinct organizations, a fact not clear to all BLA-CC members themselves, as well as their supporters and the masses.

Moreover, there continued to be disunity inside the BLA-CC. There was a debate over whether the consolidation effort was about building a new party, or about building a purely military organization. The argument for the purely military organization won the day.

As the organization debated its ideology, the majority decided upon “Marxism-Leninism”—a decision that some Muslim members wouldn’t accept. Consequently, some Muslims left the organization, while others, who felt that Islam and dialectical materialism could be reconciled, stayed. And, as mentioned above, there continued to be a contradiction between conscious New Afrikans, and members who gave lip service to the nation but didn’t accept the New Afrikan national identity.

However, the fundamental contradiction facing the BLA and, after the consolidation effort, the BLA-CC, has been the divergent tendencies toward development as an “armed fist” versus development as an armed party. The organization has been unable to break free of the ideological, theoretical, and structural limitations that characterized its origins. It’s been these limitations which prevented further development, especially of the BLA-CC.

By the mid-1970s, most cadres were in prison, and this contributed to the organization’s inability to develop. That is, the BLA-CC became “prison(er) oriented” to such an extent that energies which should have been spent on organizational development and the establishment of mass bases, instead went in other directions.

Because it was never fully oriented toward the creation of its own mass bases, the BLA-CC became heavily dependent upon others, a fact even shown in the composition of the Coordinating Committee, “which was essentially composed of imprisoned members and outside supporters gained during years of political persecution in the courts.” (12)

In the spring of 1975, the BLA-CC issued LOOKING BACK, a brief analysis and summation of BLA development. The document is helpful here because: 1) it indicates some of the conditions underlying the formation of the slogan “Build To Win”; 2) it

indicates the specific orientation that the slogan provided for the BLA-CC; 3) it contains specific objectives that were to be pursued under the guidance of the slogan:

Over the past four years, since the birth of the B.L.A., we have experienced many tactical setbacks, some have been costly in material, others in manpower (P.O.W.'s), and the most costly in blood of comrades, who gave their lives. Nevertheless, the B.L.A. still lives, still continues to struggle with arms against the oppressor.

In the beginning when we started out, our primary targets were the police, as a political consequence for their murder and brutalities against Black and Third World peoples. Bank monies were expropriated as a means of support for guerrilla units and seen as an attack on capitalism. Most of our activities were carried out on the East and West coasts, in large cities, with the hope of raising the militancy of the people to resist the oppressive state apparatus. The spark we hoped would start the fire that would burn Babylon down, was extinguished by state propaganda organs and special anti-guerrilla squads. Many comrades moved to the South, hoping to establish a southern base; this, too, failed, because we lacked knowledge of the terrain and the people. So again we moved back to the cities, this time as fugitives with little popular support among the masses. Our primary activity at that period was hiding and carrying out expropriations. With the deaths of Woody and Kimu, we launched assaults against the police that set them on edge; their counterattack saw us at the end of 1973 with four dead, over twenty comrades imprisoned in New York alone. In New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Georgia, B.L.A. members were taken prisoner by federal agents working with local police to crush the B.L.A. The year 1974 found the guns of the B.L.A. quiet, until April, when, with so many comrades imprisoned, we assaulted the Tombs in an effort to liberate some comrades; the attempt was unsuccessful, and two weeks later found three more comrades captured in Connecticut.

While our ranks outside were being diminished, our ranks inside started to grow. Within the prisons themselves, comrades launched numerous assaults and escape attempts on a regular basis. Before 1974 was over, another comrade was shot and captured, victim of an informant. Now, in the third month of 1975, we have one dead, two captured in Virginia, and another escape attempt in New York. Since the beginning we have shown a willingness to struggle and our efforts have not been in vain, for we are rich in experience that comes with trial and error. Now, in the year 1975—the Year of Sorting Out and Consolidation—we must sum up those experiences, analyze them, and return to the front.

What have we learned? We have learned much about the enemy and about ourselves. The enemy, we have come to learn, is weak, easily demoralized, and ineffective against the audacity of the guerrilla. He relies heavily on informants, the news media, and technology to combat the guerrilla. He takes advantage of our mistakes, uses a high concentration of troops as a means to intimidate and ward off attack. The enemy implements pacification programs among the people, along with terror tactics, in an effort to forestall the revolutionary tide. In essence, a lot of the enemy's strength comes from our own weakness. True, the enemy is materially and technically superior, but these gaps will be closed once we organize ourselves, instill self-discipline and organizational discipline among our ranks, improve our technical know-how, strengthen our lines of communication.

We have learned about ourselves, that we lacked a strong ideological base and strong political base, yet there is great potential for the latter. In failing to lay down an over-all strategy, we have become isolated from the masses; we have failed in seeing the strategical victories in our tactical setbacks, and thus failed to press the attack. There is much we have learned and much to be learned—how to improve relations between comrades and the people, and comrades and each other—yet by continuing to struggle, we will overcome these difficulties with revolutionary determination.

In looking back, we must never forget those comrades who gave their lives for the people, nor forget our mistakes—but constantly sum up things we've learned. Yet our look back must be a glance to see where we're going, so as not to travel the same road, where so many difficulties beset us. Let us look to the future with faith, and knowledge that the experiences of the past will be guides in assessing and implementing our present programs that will take us to victory in the future.

As We see, the description of conditions in LOOKING BACK is, on the whole, subjective; the specific orientation is indicated by reference to 'continued struggle with arms against the oppressor'; the list of specific objectives is made by reference to:

- the need for a strong ideological base;
- the need for a strong political base;
- the need for self-discipline and organizational discipline;
- the need to improve relations between comrades;
- the need to improve relations between comrades and the masses;
- the need to improve technical know-how;
- the need to strengthen lines of communication;

- the need for over-all strategy;
- the need to organize ourselves.

In 1987, We look back again, and We must ask ourselves why these objectives, among others, remain unrealized. Our answer can't help but include the realization that the changes in objective conditions had already taken a qualitative turn by the late 1960s—and yet, even in 1975, We hadn't made more than a one-sided analysis of the situation. On into the late 70s and 80s, We still hadn't begun to adequately make necessary subjective changes in our theory, line, and structure; We were merely re-arranging old quantities, continuing to use words and tactics unsuited to the new period...

Too often has it happened that, when history has taken a sharp turn, even progressive parties have for some time been unable to adapt themselves to the new situation and have repeated slogans which had formerly been correct but had now lost all meaning—lost it as “suddenly” as the sharp turn in history was “sudden”. (13)

Of course Lenin's underlying reference isn't to slogans per se, but to the need to be in tune with changes in conditions, which demand corresponding changes in line, structure, methods, or tactics. And, clearly, not all sharp turns in social development (“history”) are “sudden”.

The changes in conditions (both objective and subjective) that gave rise to the slogan “Re-Build” weren't sudden—at least not to all of us. As We take another look back, We're able to see that the “turn” in question has its immediate, most visible roots in the late 1960s, although those roots (the objective and internal/subjective movement and organizational contradictions) plunge into the 1920s, when the movement failed to build an independent New Afrikan ideology, and an independent New Afrikan communist party, on the foundations laid by the African Blood Brotherhood. (14) This was also the failure to build a revolutionary mass movement in the 1920s and the 1930s, with independence and socialism as its objective.

As the 1960s were drawing to a close, the imperialists were summing up the experiences of the preceding two decades, in light of the post-WWII conditions and realignments, re-evaluating their positions, and already beginning to implement new strategies and programs.

Today, We can look back to 1975, and see that in “the year of sorting out and consolidation,” We didn't look back far enough, our glance wasn't cast wide enough, We weren't sensitive to new developments, and our ideological perspective was one-sided and superficial.

By 1975, the movements in Afrika, South America, and Asia which had greatly inspired us, had all taken dramatic turns. Internal weaknesses (and repression) had taken their toll on the Tupamaros and the Brazilian ALN; neo-colonialism was becoming more sophisticated and entrenched in Afrika, and inside u.s. borders; “socialist” states in Asia were turning toward the right.

As the year 1969 drew to a close, scores of revolutionary cadres inside u.s. borders had been killed, well over a hundred responsible cadres were jailed, and many others isolated in clandestinity, signaling the intensity of the war against revolutionary politics.

By the time some cadres gave a definite and distinct shape to the BLA in 1971, the PRACTICAL EFFECT of counter-revolution was that revolutionary politics had found the need to become clandestinely-based.

The intense repression and counter-revolution that the old movement encountered in the late 1960s and the early 1970s wasn't just military—it was also political, economic, social and cultural. Revolutionary and progressive forces in all fields of struggle were “exposed, disrupted, misdirected, or otherwise neutralized.” The MASSES were “turned,” and New Afrikan petty-bourgeois forces were cultivated, trained, financed, and pushed out front to take the lead of the “mass front”—the same front that We had abandoned.

In line with the state's strategy to undermine the national scope of the movement, revolutionary and progressive cadres began to focus on a narrowly-conceived “community organizing,” which lacked national coordination and the focus provided by a revolutionary party perspective and strategy. The struggle around local issues lacked a revolutionary orientation: the struggle to seize power for the people became local struggles to seize “a piece of the action”; the struggle to “overcome” national oppression became the struggle to achieve “parity” in the capitalist electoral and small business arenas; the struggle for a revolutionary mass party became the struggle for a “black third party” to operate within the limits of bourgeois legality and ideological hegemony. Surely, by 1975, it was indeed time to build to win. By 1975, at least, it was time for the entire movement to sort out and consolidate, to re-orient and re-organize.

In the face of intense, broad, effective counter-revolution, the “center” of revolutionary politics was OBJECTIVELY forced to operate from clandestinity, forced to “find its time” and to find new ways to go to the people and initiate a new phase of struggle with an enemy who was then “in power and secure.” It was a time to re-build, and We summed up the situation with the slogan “Build To Win”.

But, We didn't initiate a re-building process, because We saw no need to make fundamental changes in ideology, line, strategy, or methods. We made no thorough analyses, and what few analyses We did make were subjective and inconsistent with the basic principles and methods of revolutionary scientific socialism. These analyses were also inconsistent with the objective demands of a protracted, revolutionary people's war, waged inside the imperialist heartland, AFTER “legal” means had been exhausted, and AFTER mass rebellions had been quelled and armed political formations had been neutralized!

There are certain similarities between this period in our development and what Lenin described as the Russian “years of reaction (1907-1910).” In Russia, czarism was “victorious”; and in the u.s., the imperialists had won another respite:

All the revolutionary and opposition parties were smashed. Depression, demoralization, splits, discord, defection, and pornography took the place of politics. There was an ever greater drift towards philosophical idealism; mysticism became the garb of counter-revolutionary sentiments. At the same time, however, it was this great defeat that taught the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary class a real

and very useful lesson, a lesson in historical dialectics, a lesson in an understanding of the political struggle, and in the art and science of waging that struggle. It is at moments of need that one learns who one's friends are. Defeated armies learn their lesson...

The revolutionary parties had to complete their education. They were learning how to attack. Now they had to realize that such knowledge must be supplemented with the knowledge of how to retreat in good order. They had to realize—and it is from bitter experience that the revolutionary class learns to realize this—that victory is impossible unless one has learned how to attack and retreat properly. Of all the defeated opposition and revolutionary parties, the Bolsheviks effected the most orderly retreat, with the least loss to their “army”, with its core best preserved, with the least significant splits (in point of depth and incurability), with the least demoralization, and in the best condition to resume work on the broadest scale and in the most correct and energetic manner. The Bolsheviks achieved this only because they ruthlessly exposed and expelled the revolutionary phrase-mongers, those who did not wish to understand that one had to retreat, that one had to know how to retreat, and that one absolutely had to learn how to work legally in the most reactionary of trade unions, cooperatives and insurance societies and similar organizations. (15)

There is much similarity between this period in our struggle and the period described by Lenin, but there are also major differences. We have our own peculiar forms of depression, demoralization, splits, discord, defection. We haven't learned to “retreat,” and many of us don't recognize the need to do so. Nor do We understand “retreat” as an element of political and military science.

We can speak of our own “ever greater drift towards philosophical idealism,” but We'd have to add that We didn't have far to drift, because our move towards philosophical materialism was and is not that significant (which is intimately related to why the state had no real New Afrikan communist party to smash, in the 1920s or in the 1960s).

Lenin describes a defeat which taught the revolutionary party and the revolutionary class a lesson. Well, they could only learn that lesson by recognizing and acknowledging defeat and its internal causes. We don't recognize defeats, and consequently We don't acknowledge major internal weaknesses—so We learn fewer lessons, and We learn them later.

Having learned no lessons, our “core” remains exposed, and We forego the rebuilding process that would allow us to “retreat” (i.e., take cover, regroup, rectify, etc.) in an orderly manner, and thus be able to carry on and resume work on the broadest scale and in the most correct and energetic manner.

We haven't learned how (largely because We haven't recognized the need) to work “legally” in the “most reactionary” organizations, because We haven't had theoretical perspective allowing us to see the need for clandestinely-based mass work. This is essentially what “re-building” is all about.

...true revolutionary leaders must not only be good at correcting their ideas, theories, plans or programs when errors are discovered; but when a certain objective process has already progressed and changed from one stage of development to another, they must also be good at making themselves and all their fellow-revolutionaries progress and change in their subjective knowledge along with it, that is to say, they must ensure that the proposed new revolutionary tasks and new working programs correspond to the new changes in the situation. In a revolutionary period the situation changes very rapidly; if the knowledge of revolutionaries does not change rapidly in accordance with the changed situation, they will be unable to lead the revolution to victory. (16)

The specific features of the conditions underlying the slogans “Build To Win” and “Re-Build” are different, and thus the orientation provided by the slogans also differs. More specifically, the slogans differ in their reference to: 1) what should be built; 2) why the effort should be made; 3) how the work should be done. Briefly:

The What: “Build To Win” was a call to build a foco, an “armed front”. The call was made by “urban guerrillas” who defined the character of their activity as “military,” leaving “political” activity to the “mass front”. Their own actions were “political” only insofar as they were parts of that immediate process which led to the “capacity for armed struggle,” contributed to the construction of the armed front’s clandestine infrastructure, and in this way figured into the larger revolutionary process of national liberation revolution. These cadres didn’t see themselves as members of a party, they didn’t consider their activity as party activity. For them, parties existed and operated only aboveground.

“Re-Build” is a call to build a new movement in general, and to build a new party, in particular. The call is made by New Afrikan communist cadres who define the character of all their activity as political. They believe that a party operates in all areas of the life of the masses, thus its activity assumes political, economic, social, ideological, and military forms. Thus, the party is a “sum total of diversified organizations.” They believe that a party and national liberation movement based inside u.s. borders must be clandestine, even while engaging in mass, political forms of struggle.

The Why: “Build To Win” was a call made on the belief that the mass (political) front was incapable and/or unwilling to build the armed front. And, building the armed front was necessary because the movement needed something “new”—but not a new kind of party, since they believed there were “already enough parties” (defined on the basis of their leadership and form, as opposed to ideological orientation and the nature of their practice). What the movement needed was an “apparatus of revolutionary violence” (narrowly defined as armed formations).

“Re-Build” is a call made on the belief that the people’s vanguard organization must be responsible for the entire nation and the entire movement. The “apparatus of revolutionary violence” is actually the people’s vanguard party—and REVOLUTIONARY violence is manifested in political as well as military forms. While other parties may already exist, none of them have thought and practice which appeals to us, which is consistent enough with our own beliefs to cause us to abandon our commitment to build the kind of formation We think necessary in order to win and to build a socialist society.

The How: “Build To Win” called for construction of the armed front and its clandestine infrastructure, and sought to keep it “organizationally separate” (i.e., structurally and in effect ideologically separate) from the mass front. The armed front was to be built through the conduct of armed actions, that would in themselves generate the capacity for armed struggle and thus escalate the entire revolutionary process.

“Re-Build” says that repression “came” in the 1960s, and has never “gone away.” Therefore, the objective conditions which forced us underground—that is, which forced the ENTIRE MOVEMENT underground—continue to exist. This means that the people’s vanguard political formation can’t sit on the open front, exposing itself and through itself, the entire movement, to “search and destroy missions.” We have to struggle and learn to build a new movement and a new vanguard party by first establishing and consolidating their centers in a clandestine base. We must come to let clandestinity characterize the entire movement, adopting new methods and styles for conducting ALL activity. It won’t be an easy or speedy process, but We think it’s the only one that will work.

Re-Build!

Atiba Shanna

1. V.I. Lenin, “On Slogans,” Collected Works, Vol. 25.
2. See Vita Wa Watu, Book Eight, pps. 45-53.
3. Coordinating Committee, Black Liberation Army, Message To The Black Movement: A Political Statement From The Black Underground.
4. Jalil Abdul Muntaqim, “On the Black Liberation Army,” Arm The Spirit, August-September, 1980.
5. Atiba Shanna, “Debray Re-Visited,” Notes From a New Afrikan P.O.W. Journal, Book Four, p. 14.
6. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, PFLP: Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine.
7. Muntaqim (Notes 7-12).
13. Lenin, “On Slogans”.
14. See Vita Wa Watu, Book Eight, pps. 29-38.
15. V.I. Lenin, “‘Left-Wing’ Communism: An Infantile Disorder,” Collected Works, Vol. 31.
16. Mao Tse-Tung, “On Practice,” Selected Works, Vol. 1.